

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League on Sunday voiced its deep concern at the recent escalation of violence in South Lebanon and warned against further Israeli attacks in the region. "The Arab League is following with deep concern the situation in South Lebanon and Israeli shelling of that region," said Talaat Hamed, spokesman for the 22-member pan-Arab organization. He warned against "further Israeli military escalation in South Lebanon and the policies of the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu." "This policy reflects Israel's aggressive intentions towards the peace process in general and Lebanon in particular," Mr. Hamed said. Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid was contacting concerned parties and members of the five-nation committee monitoring a truce in South Lebanon to warn of "danger following Israeli violation of the April 1996 ceasefire accord," Mr. Hamed said.

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RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi entertainment and media magnate who is a business partner of singer Michael Jackson was hospitalized after a car accident in the Saudi capital, a source close to the businessman said Sunday. Billionaire Prince Walid Ben Talal, who heads 40 companies, was admitted to King Khalid Military Hospital in Riyadh after his car collided with another vehicle late Friday, the source said. The 39-year-old nephew of King Fahd suffered bruises and is expected to be released within 48 hours, the source said. The prince's daughter, Princess Rima, who had been with him in the car, suffered cuts on her head, the source added. In October, Prince Walid announced that he had acquired 50 per cent of the Hollywood, California-based Landmark Entertainment Group. In June he announced the creation of a joint venture with Mr. Jackson called Kingdom Entertainment.

## King in intense effort to avert collapse of Israel-PLO accord HM holds talks with Arafat in Gaza and Netanyahu in Tel Aviv King says he expects things to be on course

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter with agency dispatches

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Sunday launched an intense effort to save an Israel-Palestinian agreement on a withdrawal from Hebron, shuttling between Gaza and Tel Aviv for meetings with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Reports said King Hussein's effort came at the urging of U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross, who had planned to return to Washington on Sunday after a two-week mediation effort but decided to stay and take part in the King's talks with Mr. Netanyahu.

King Hussein's helicopter landed in a small Tel Aviv airport around 10:00 p.m. (2000 GMT) and proceeded in a motorcade escorted by police cars with sirens blaring towards the defence ministry where he was received with a warm, two-handed handshake by Mr. Netanyahu.

"King Hussein has been a great friend of Israel and a great friend of peace," Mr. Netanyahu said. "I'm looking forward to our conversation."

"I'm happy to be here," replied the King, who had previously visited West Jerusalem for Yitzhak Rabin's funeral 14 months ago and Tel Aviv last spring. The two walked down a red carpet past Israeli and Jordanian flags and entered the premier's office.

The King and Mr. Netanyahu had a closed-door meeting, followed by

another attended by Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and members of the Jordanian delegation accompanying the King as well as chief of the Palestinian negotiating team Saeb Erakat and Mr. Ross.

Following the meeting, King Hussein and Mr. Netanyahu made a telephone call with Mr. Arafat with the aim of reaching a final formula for an accord on the implementation of the final status negotiations, the Jordan News Agency, Petra said.

It said Palestinian and Israeli committees were to hold meetings to agree upon the final wording of the accord before showing it to the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships.

Mr. Netanyahu said after the 75-minute talks more work was needed to achieve an agreement on further Israeli troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

"I think because of the important initiative that His Majesty took we have made considerable progress and I think we can envision the end of the negotiations in sight. There is still work to be done but I think we've made a very important step forward," Mr. Netanyahu told a news conference before the King returned home after the talks.

King Hussein said: "We are on the verge of completion of a long road and as far as I'm concerned I leave here confident everything will lead in the right direction."

Earlier, King Hussein, who was accompanied by Mr. Kabariti, Royal Court

Chief Awn Khasawneh and other senior officials, met for several hours in autonomous Gaza with Mr. Arafat.

Information Minister Marwan Muasher said it was "a positive visit" and that King Hussein hoped to "achieve a tangible result" in Tel Aviv.

"I think everything is moving very, very well and I hope all these efforts will lead to a happy conclusion," the King told reporters before flying by helicopter to Tel Aviv.

"The King is carrying with him a compromise that has been discussed with the Americans, Egyptians and Arafat," a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official told Reuters in Gaza. "It will be submitted to Netanyahu tonight."

U.S.-brokered talks between Israel and the PLO over self-rule for the town of Hebron have reached an impasse over the timing of three additional Israeli redeployments from mainly rural areas of the West Bank.

"The first phase of the redeployment has been agreed with the Israelis to start on Feb. 28," the official said, disclosing the starting date for the first time.

"The three phases...will be completed within 12 months of mid-1998," he said.

Israel proposes to complete the West Bank pull-backs by May 1999 and the United States has suggested mid-1998. The PLO had demanded Israel stick to a peace deal under which the withdrawals were to have been completed by September this year. The official said Palestinian

negotiator Saeb Erakat flew with King Hussein to Tel Aviv and that they would work all night drafting an agreement.

"If all is done, a (Arafat-Netanyahu) summit will be held on Monday," he said.

In Gaza, King Hussein and President Arafat stressed the need to pursue the peace talks to achieve a just, durable and comprehensive peace in the region.

The two sides reaffirmed that the peace process was going through a difficult stage requiring the intensification of efforts at the Arab and international levels to restore the momentum of the peace process to ensure its success.

King Hussein voiced Jordan's full support for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to find solutions to the pending issues with the Israeli side including the redeployment of troops in Hebron and other issues ahead of engaging in the final status negotiations.

"We support the Palestinian National Authority's position and we feel that they have offered all they can to save the process," a Jordanian official said. "We do not accept the concept of the Israeli government renegotiating accords which have already been signed."

"The peace process is in critical danger and we want to see how we can help," the official said. "This does not only affect the Palestinians."

President Arafat expressed the PNA's appreciation of King Hussein and the Jordanian



His Majesty King Hussein is received by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat upon his arrival in Gaza on Sunday and (right) by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv (AFP and Reuters photos)

dan government for their support for the Palestinian people.

Attending the meetings on the Jordanian side were Prime Minister Kabariti, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Hadi Majali, Minister of Trade and Industry Ali Abul Ragheb, Information Minister Marwan Muasher, and head of Jordan's representation office in Gaza Ziyad Majali.

On the Palestinian side, the talks were attended by the PLO Executive Committee member Mahmoud Abbas, Minister of Education Yasser Amr, Mr. Arafat's office Secretary

General Al Tayyeb Abdul Rahim, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Nabil Shaath, Minister of Local Government Saeb Erakat, Minister of Economy Hamed Masri, and PLO Executive Committee members.

Mr. Shaath said after the talks King Hussein's "personal influence" on Israel might help sway Mr. Netanyahu.

"King Hussein is here to say that implementing the agreement (on Israeli troop redeployment in Hebron) is a very important step in making the whole peace process work," Mr. Shaath told reporters. "His personal influence



and the influence of his country on Israel should be important," Mr. Shaath said.

It was the King's first visit to self-ruled Gaza. "This is a great honour and encouragement from him to push the peace process forward and to strengthen the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship," Mr. Arafat told Israel Radio earlier on Sunday.

The King became the first Arab head of state to visit the Palestinian self-ruled areas when he met Mr. Arafat in the West Bank enclave of Jericho last October. It was his first visit to the West Bank since Israel seized it in 1967.

## King cancels plan to use Gaza airport

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein had to cancel plans to become the first foreign leader to use the Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip on Sunday because of an Israeli-Palestinian standoff, Israeli officials said Sunday.

An Israeli official was also quoted as saying by Agence France Presse that the Palestinian request to allow the landing of the King's personal plane in Gaza was a "cynical attempt" to take advantage of the King's visit there.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat announced that King Hussein, making his first visit to Palestinian-ruled Gaza, would land his personal jet at the airport, located at Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

"He will land his plane in Gaza," Mr. Arafat told reporters. "This has many meanings, reflecting the relationship between us and at the same time pushing the peace process forward."

"Mr. Arafat ordered an elaborate welcoming ceremony for the King at the airport, seen as an important symbol of Palestinian aspirations to sovereignty."

But Israeli authorities refused the Palestinian request for landing permission and King Hussein flew from Amman to Gaza City by helicopter, officials said.

"We responded to the Palestinians that as long as an agreement has not been signed and the airport is not fully operational, there was no way planes could land there," said Shlomo Dror, spokesman for the coordinator of Israeli activities in the occupied territories.

Mr. Dror said the Palestinian demand to let the King land at the airport was "a cynical attempt to profit from the King's visit."

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## Arafat eyes Benelux bloc for Mideast

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Sunday he has a dream of a regional economic bloc including Israel which he dubbed the "Benelux" of the Middle East. "Peace has to be constructed on a strong foundation of economy, and I can see, dream, that in the future we will have a strong Benelux from Jordan, Palestine and Israel" and at a later stage Lebanon, Mr. Arafat told Israeli businessmen. Benelux groups the Northern European countries of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Mr. Arafat also expressed his hope that the Palestinian economy, which he said would be a free market, would "imitate the success" of the Israeli economy, Israeli public radio reported.

## Iraq protests to U.N. over Turkey's incursions

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq protested to the United Nations against Turkey's "continuous violations of Iraq's airspace and territory," the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said on Sunday. "The repeated Turkish troops' shelling of Iraq's villages and towns and entering illegally to its territory represent a flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity," INA quoted from a letter sent by Iraq's Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali Sahaf to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Turkish armed forces, backed by aircraft, have frequently crossed into northern Iraq in pursuit of rebels of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK). Mr. Sahaf held the "Turkish government fully responsible for these aggressive acts" and urged the United Nations to "put an end to such threats and aggression."

## Aziz arrives en route to France, to discuss oil, trade and sanctions

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz arrived here Sunday evening for talks with Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on bilateral issues and Iraq's efforts to lift the more than six-year international sanctions against it, official sources said.

Mr. Aziz, who is on his way to France, was staying at the Guest Palace, the officials said.

It was expected earlier that Mr. Kabariti and Mr. Aziz would meet late Sunday, but the prime minister was accompanying His Majesty King Hussein on a visit to the Gaza Strip and later to Tel Aviv.

As such, the officials said they did not expect a Kabariti-Aziz meeting to take place late Sunday and said the encounter could take place early Monday before the Iraqi minister's departure for France.

In France, Mr. Aziz is expected to hold talks with Prime Minister Alain Juppe and Foreign Minister Herve de Charette.

French foreign ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said in Paris the meetings were scheduled for Tuesday.

The talks between Mr. Kabariti and Mr. Aziz were expected to focus on issues that are holding up the renewal of a bilateral accord under which Iraq supplies Jordan's oil needs and a related trade protocol under which the Kingdom

exports food and medicine to its eastern neighbour.

On the political front, Mr. Kabariti is expected to reiterate Jordan's call on Baghdad to fulfil all its obligations under the U.N. Security Council resolutions related to the Gulf crisis and also urge the Iraqi government to regain regional and international credibility.

On the bilateral front, Mr. Kabariti and Mr. Aziz are expected to remove problems blocking the renewal of the oil accord and trade protocol.

Jordan and Iraq have been discussing the oil agreement since December and technical experts are continuing negotiations in Baghdad, according to the officials.

Officials have denied that the key hurdle was an Iraqi demand for a \$2 to \$3 per barrel increase in the price of oil it supplies to Jordan and a reduction in the amount of free oil it sends to the Kingdom.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Hashem Dabbas was quoted as saying that the two sides agreed during a visit he paid to Baghdad last month to retain a \$15.25 per barrel price.

Independent sources said the Iraqi government also appeared to be holding out for an increase in the volume of trade protocol from the present \$220 million.

This increase, according to the sources, could be equal to the difference in the price of oil that Baghdad is demanding.

Regardless of the snags, officials say they are confident that the two sides would be able to reach a compromise and renew the two agreements.

"Jordan and Iraq need each other, and both fully aware of it," said an official. "Both are anxious to maintain the relationship and, as such, common grounds would be found."

The Iraqi oil supply to Jordan is exempt from the United Nations sanctions.

In Paris, Mr. Rummelhardt said meanwhile the Aziz visit will allow France to remind Iraq that it must comply with all U.N. resolutions linked to Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which led to the sanctions.

It will be Mr. Aziz's third visit to France since the 1991 Gulf war to liberate Kuwait. It follows France's decision last month to withdraw from a new Turkey-based multinational air force to protect Kurds in northern Iraq.

The London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat newspaper quoted Western diplomatic sources as saying that Iraqi authorities wanted to send President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday to France for further medical treatment following an attempt to kill him a month ago (see page 2).

But Mr. Rummelhardt said: "There is no question and there never was any question that Uday Saddam Hussein would be sent to France for medical treatment."

## Israel must make peace with Syria to keep peace with Egypt — Bassiouni

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Egyptian Ambassador Mohammad Bassiouni warned Israel in remarks published Sunday that relations between the two countries will collapse if Israel does not make peace with Syria.

"The agreement between Israel and Egypt will collapse if Israel won't sign with Syria," Mr. Bassiouni said in an interview with the Jewish Orthodox newspaper this week.

"I don't want to threaten, but if they don't sign agreements, nothing good will come out of it," he said.

Egypt became the first Arab state to sign a peace agreement with Israel in 1979. The so-called Camp David accords included a plan for eventual Palestinian autonomy.

Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994, while negotiations between Israel and Syria have been frozen since early last year.

"The agreement signed with Egypt was conditioned on an overall peace agreement with all the Arab countries," Mr. Bassiouni told the weekly. "The agreement with us will be broken if Israel doesn't sign with Syria and the other Arab countries. A partial peace agreement with any Arab country is fragile and not practical," Bassiouni explained. "It's true you (Israel) signed with Egypt and Jordan but it won't be enough until there will be peace agreements with all Arab countries and that includes Syria."

Bassiouni also rejected accusations by Israeli government officials that Egypt had persuaded Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to hold up a long-awaited agreement on the extension of self-rule to the West Bank city of Hebron.

The officials charged that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak convinced Mr. Arafat not to sign an agreement on the Hebron pullback unless Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu commits himself in writing to further troop withdrawals from the West Bank this year as required under interim peace accords.

Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Mubarak spoke on the phone Saturday in an effort to patch up differences over the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

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## Israel releases 3 Jordanians

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Three Jordanians are expected home on Monday after they were released by Israel, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said Sunday quoting sources at the Jordanian embassy in Tel Aviv.

The release of the three leaves 18 other Jordanians in Israeli jails but securing their freedom involves a difficult process, officials have said.

Since the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October 1994, Israel freed 20 Jordanian prisoners, including the three reported by Petra on Sunday and identified as Salah Al Shaqran, Maher Bazzar and Bassam Kamal.

Petra did not say on what counts the three were jailed or give details of their sentences.

Officials here have said that the government is pressuring Israel to free all Jordanian prisoners but that a blanket release of all was not simply possible because of the peculiarities of Israeli laws.

Israeli President Ezer Weizman promised, during a visit to Jordan in November, that he would look into the cases of Jordanian prisoners in Israel. But, officials here and Israeli sources said, the Israeli president did not have sweeping authority to offer amnesty to every prisoner.

Announcing that Israel was to release three prisoners soon, Information Min-

ister Marwan Muasher said in November:

"Securing the release of the rest is going to be a lengthy process because all of them are convicted of killing Israeli civilians or soldiers."

The Israeli military has the final say in releasing prisoners serving sentences on murder charges, and it has consistently followed a lengthy procedure before recommending to the government that any murder convict be freed.

That posture is one of the key hurdles cited by Israeli government officials for the delays in freeing many of the thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails as

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## Netanyahu appointee steps down

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's attorney general-designate withdrew his candidacy on Sunday after the supreme court ordered a delay in his appointment.

"Roni Bar-On has submitted his resignation after being the target of a campaign," Justice Minister Tzvi Hanegbi told Israel television.

The court was acting on a complaint filed Friday by Labour Deputy Ophir Pines, who charged that Mr. Bar-On's appointment was politically motivated and designed to hinder investigations into right-wing politicians.

Mr. Bar-On, a well-known defence attorney and member of the central committee of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party, was to replace Michael Ben-Yair, an appointee of Israel's former Labour government who had angered the prime minister by indicting several of his close associates.

The justices did not rule that Mr. Bar-On's appointment was illegal, but said they wanted to study the written protocol on his nomination adopted Friday by the cabinet in a vote that saw five of 18 ministers abstain.

The decision to name Mr. Bar-On, 48, who had just resigned from Likud's central committee ahead of his anticipated post, sparked a storm of protest from the opposition and even criticism from within Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government.

Senior cabinet members, including Finance Minister Dan Meridor, challenged Mr. Netanyahu's decision at Friday's cabinet meeting and the head of the parliamentary legal committee, Shaul Yaalon, of the right-wing National Religious Party, publicly criticised the choice on Sunday.

"A red line has been crossed, our credibility is in doubt," said Mr. Yaalon, whose party is a member of Mr. Netanyahu's governing coalition. Mr. Hanegbi, who worked as a paralegal in Mr. Bar-On's office before becoming an attorney, defended the choice, saying: "The government needs to be represented by a jurist who shares its ideas." But the opposition was outraged.

"Never has there been such a politically motivated appointment to this position," charged Amnon Rubinstein, a former justice minister and member of parliament for the left-wing Meretz Party.

Mr. Rubinstein also challenged Mr. Bar-On's qualifications to hold the key post, noting that past attorney generals had been former district judges and law professors while the Likud official was a simple attorney.

Nissar Sarid, leader of the left-wing Meretz Party, had called on Mr. Bar-On to renounce his new job voluntarily "before becoming a subject of ridicule."

**PRAYER TIMES**  
05:11.....Fajr  
06:32.....(Sunrise) Duha  
11:44.....Dhuhr  
14:33.....Asr  
16:56.....Maghreb  
18:18.....Isha

**CHURCHES**  
St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.

## S. Africa said planning arms sales to Syria

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — South Africa has plans to sell arms worth three billion rand (\$641 million) to Syria, despite fears of angering the United States, a report said here Sunday.

President Nelson Mandela's cabinet has given conditional approval to supply tank firing control systems to Damascus, which has been labelled a "state sponsor of terrorism" by the U.S., Johannesburg's Sunday Times said.

The proposed sale, which follows decisions to pursue closer ties with Iran, Cuba and Libya despite U.S. disapproval, shows Pretoria's determination to adopt foreign policies that are not "dictated by foreign powers," the newspaper said.

The cabinet, however, has made the sale conditional on the approval of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who was not at the December meeting at which the issue was discussed, the Sunday Times said.

Mr. Mbeki's spokesman, Ricky Naidoo, confirmed that the matter had been referred to the deputy president, who was in India at the time the decision was taken.

"He is still considering it, and it will be discussed again by cabinet later this month, when a final decision will be taken," Mr. Naidoo said.

The matter will be referred back to the cabinet if, in Mr. Mbeki's view, the deal breaks the U.S. counter-terrorism act, which allows the U.S. to apply counter-measures against countries that provide military equipment to perceived sponsors of terrorism.

State Department sources in Washington meanwhile said such a sale would "raise concerns."

While the U.S. maintains sanctions against Syria, the

cussed, the Sunday Times said.

Some U.S. military figures do not trust South Africa, given its history of selling illegally obtained U.S. technology to nations the U.S. considers hostile, including Iraq, the Sunday Times said.

Israel's acting ambassador, Victor Harel, told the newspaper he would inquire about the matter with the South African foreign ministry.

"In general the Middle East process should be helped by all friends of the peace process by not selling military equipment to Syria. Any sale ... is a

source of concern to Israel and its security," Mr. Harel said.

Israel has waged a verbal war with Syria over the December bombing of a bus in Damascus in which at least 15 people were killed and many others injured.

Syria has countered that Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, planted the bomb.

Quoting unnamed government sources, the Sunday Times said South Africa's official arms control committee had not decided whether tank firing control systems are lethal military equipment, as defined in U.S. law.

Water Affairs Minister Kader Asmal, who heads the arms committee, declined to comment to the newspaper.

"That is not something in the public domain. I cannot confirm it or deny it," he said.

The Greek Cypriot authorities recently finalised a deal to buy a Russian S-300 anti-aircraft system, sparking warnings from Ankara that it would not hesitate to strike the south of the island if the missiles were deployed.

The chief of staff of the Turkish army, Ismail Hakkı Karadayı, is due on Monday to visit the northern part of the island that has been occupied by Turkish troops since 1974.

Mr. Reppas added that Greece was a "major factor for peace, stability and security in the region, its diplomatic and military capacities are kept at a high level in order to further this objective."

U.S. emissary Carey Cavanaugh was due in the region Sunday. He will visit Nicosia before travelling on to Athens and Ankara.

Mr. Reppas said that the Greek Cypriot proposals and will respond, taking account of our national interests," Mr. Reppas said.

ISTANBUL (AP) — A top official of Turkey's Islamic-led government flew to the United States on Saturday to seek support from Washington and international bodies for the country's economic policies.

State Minister Fehim Adak, adviser to Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan on economic issues, is the first minister from Mr. Erbakan's Welfare Party to make an official visit to Washington since the Islamic-led government was formed in July.

Mr. Adak will meet with Assistant Secretary of State Alan Larson, and U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin during the week-long visit, the Anatolia news agency said Saturday.

Mr. Erbakan's visits to Libya and Iran soon after he came to power strained ties with Washington, which has accused those countries of supporting international terrorism.

Turkey has signed several trade agreements with Iran designed to double the volume of trade between the countries.

Mr. Adak's trip, at the invitation of the U.S. Treasury Department, is seen here as providing an opportunity for better understanding between the two allies.

Turkish press reports have said that Mr. Adak was invited to discuss Turkey's financial problems, which include persistently high inflation that registered 80 per cent last year.

A standby agreement to implement an economic austerity programme under the supervision of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), signed in July 1994, expired in February 1996 with part of a loan suspended because of a government crisis.

Mr. Adak, accompanied by Turkey's Central Bank Governor Gazi Ercel, a former IMF official, will meet with IMF and World Bank officials.

He will also hold talks with private firms and banks in New York, Anatolia said.

## Greece:

## Turkey failed to respond to offers

ISTANBUL (AP) — Greece on Sunday accused Turkey of failing to respond to its overtures for a " rapprochement " as relations between the two countries reached a low ebb over a planned missile deployment in Cyprus.

Greece is "determined to normalise relations with Turkey (through) a policy of step-by-step rapprochement," government spokesman Dimitris Reppas said.

"Unfortunately this clear message has not yet reached its recipient."

"Turkey, with the pronouncements of its leaders and its visits to the occupied territories in Cyprus, is demonstrating its refusal to take part in the international legal order and its inability to develop a policy based on the rules of international law and good neighbourliness," Mr. Reppas said.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### 50 Iraqis caught trying to enter Greece

ATHENS (AP) — THE Greek coast guard caught 50 Iraqi Kurds trying to sneak into Greece in two boats from neighbouring Turkey early Saturday and three Turkish crewmen were arrested. The coast guard said one of the Turks was slightly wounded by warning shots fired when one of the two boats refused to stop. Thirty-seven Iraqi Kurds were taken into custody in the first encounter when the boat they were in captained by one Turk, was spotted in the narrow channel between Greece and Turkey in the southeastern Aegean near the island of Rhodes. Later, the coast guard stopped a second boat carrying 13 Iraqi Kurds heading for the island of Ro, also near Rhodes. The illegal immigrants were taken into custody and one of the two Turks aboard was wounded by the warning shots. The Iraqi Kurds were expected to seek political refugee status and would be taken to a United Nations refugee camp near Athens within the next few days.

### Crew rescued from mutinous Russian ship

ISTANBUL (AP) — The Turkish coast guard rescued three Russian sailors Saturday after a mutiny by Croatian crewmen, the Anatolia news agency said. The Russians — the captain, the machinist and a radio operator — were locked in a cabin by the 14 Croatian sailors aboard the Ivan Chernyn after the captain announced that he wanted to replace the crew, the private HBB television reported. The coast guard stopped the boat in the Black Sea near Istanbul after it was reported hijacked, Anatolia said. There was no resistance to the rescue of the Russians. The Croatian seamen were to be sent back to Croatia, the agency said. The Ivan Chernyn had been travelling from Bulgaria, carrying urea to Spain.

### Israeli fencers invited to tournament in Iran

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Iran has invited Israel's fencing team to participate in an international tournament next month in Tehran, the first time the Jewish state has been asked to send athletes to Iran in 22 years, the Israeli fencing federation said on Sunday. An official with the federation said Israel received the invitation on Friday from Mohammad Zadeh, vice-president of the Iranian fencing association and chairman of the Feb. 12-14 Tehran international fencing championships. The invitation arrived in an envelope of the Paris-based international fencing federation and was transmitted by the Iranian embassy in the French capital, the official said. Uri Karmi, president of the Israeli fencing association, told reporters on Sunday that he would ask the foreign ministry for guidance in deciding whether or not to accept the invitation. The last time Israeli athletes performed in Iran was at the 1974 Asia Games, five years before the revolution led by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Israel has regularly accused Tehran of supporting militant violence against the Jewish state both by Palestinian and Lebanese guerrillas.

## Qadhafi sons wish Uday quick recovery

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The sons of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi have wished a quick recovery to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday after he was wounded in an assassination attempt last month.

"Colonel Qadhafi's sons Mohammad, Saif Al Islam, Saïd, Hannibal and Moatassem congratulated the Iraqi president's son for surviving the attack and wished him a quick recovery," said Babel newspaper, which is run by Uday.

Uday, 33, was shot and wounded when he drove through the wealthy Mansur neighbourhood of the Iraqi capital on Dec. 12 and has been recovering in Baghdad's Ibn Sina Hospital.

London-based Al Hayat newspaper said that Iraqi authorities wanted to send President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday to France for further medical treatment following an attempt to kill him a month ago.

But Jacques Rummelhardt, the French foreign ministry spokesman in Paris, said: "There is no question and there never was any question that Uday Saddam Hussein would be sent to France for medical treatment."

Western sources in London told Al Hayat that Baghdad "is making contacts with international organisations and wants permission from the U.N. Sanctions Committee to prepare a plane to send Uday to France to continue his treatment."

## Iranian cleric proposes temporary marriage for young to avoid 'sin'

TEHRAN (AFP) — A prominent Shiite Muslim cleric has proposed the idea of temporary marriage for young Iranians to prevent them from being tempted into committing "sinful" acts.

Ayatollah Mohieddin Haeri Shirazi, the prayer leader of the southern city of Shiraz, said the government should implement the Islamic law on temporary marriage, known as Sigheh.

Sigheh, which is occasionally practised by religious Iranians, allows a man and a woman to be married under a summary religious ceremony, permitting the couple to have sexual relations.

The temporary marriage is for a specified period, which sometimes can be as short as a single day.

"To prevent the young from deviating, we must bring the Sharia law on marriage closer to practice," the ayatollah said during a seminar organised this week on the problems of marriage. "It should be allowed, not boycotted."

He advised however that the initiative be "gradual and limited" and implemented with "fastidiousness."

"Disciplinary committees" could be set up in universities to see to "ever better implementation of this divine decree and stopping it from being abused," Ayatollah Shirazi said.

"In our Islamic society, we need to find an alternative to the illegitimate and secret liaisons the young establish under the guise of friendship," he concluded.

The ayatollah was voicing an ever-growing concern in Iran over the unfilled sexual needs of the young, who are forbidden from establishing relations

with the opposite sex outside of wedlock or close family circles.

After the 1979 Islamic revolution, the authorities waged a campaign to segregate public places to reduce contact between the sexes for fear it would lead to "illegitimate" relationships.

Similar attempts were made to separate classes in universities but the initiative was abandoned as impractical. However, fundamentalists are pressing on with the campaign.

The authorities also closed all brothels and waged a fierce fight against prostitution.

Despite enjoying support among some top clerics, the idea of temporary marriage is opposed by many Islamic intellectuals, who see it as demeaning to the status of women.

The Islamic leftwing Salam newspaper said the practice "could well serve the sexual needs of the men, but can not be a viable solution and encouragement for women," who are expected to be monogamous in a culture highly protective of them.

Others have suggested marriage at an early age as a "moral and acceptable" solution to the sexual and romantic needs of the young. But the answer appears impractical given the problems of unemployment and the high cost of living in Iranian cities.

A university graduate can expect a starting salary of between \$50 to \$100 per month — a meagre sum considering a small apartment here costs at least \$30,000 and that there is no credit system.

Adding to the burden, many traditional middle-

class families set high standards for a potential suitor, requiring him to have a high-profile job, a house, and the money to finance a lavish wedding party.

Several clergyman at the marriage seminar urged the government to extend interest-free loans to prospective couples to help them start a marriage.

Presidential adviser on youth affairs, Morteza Mirbagheri, said an estimated two million people were willing to get married in Iran, but that they could not afford to or were unable to meet the right person.

To help resolve the problem of match-making, the authorities have been turning to more modern and less traditional means.

The state-sponsored Marriage Foundation, created after the revolution, employs computer technology to set up marriages.

Its director, Abolghasem Hezavehi, told Akhbar newspaper that the centre created a "secret" file for every applicant containing their physical and emotional characteristics as well as the level of their education and income.

The pair, matched by the computer, visit the centre separately and are allowed to view a picture of their prospective partner. If interested, an introduction session will be arranged in the presence of a counselor.

However, the identity and address of the other party are withheld until a final agreement is reached. Then the information will be given to the prospective families to arrange further contacts and ensure the affair unfolds in a proper manner.

### JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

### PROGRAMME TWO

13:05 Min Alhadi Al-Mohammadi  
13:30.....Cartoon  
14:30.....Deepwater Haven  
15:00.....Feature Film — Spirit Rider  
16:50 Call for Prayer and Iftar  
17:30.....I Love Lucy  
18:00.....Magazine Science — Cinq Sur Cinq  
19:30.....News Headlines  
19:35.....Roseanne  
20:02.....Islam in The West  
20:30 Babylon 5 (Science Fiction)  
21:10.....Lazarus Man  
22:00.....News in English  
22:25.....Journey Into Islam  
23:00.....Under Suspicion  
23:50.....Mini Series — The River Kings  
01:15.....Ramadan Talks

### PRAYER TIMES

05:11.....Fajr  
06:32.....(Sunrise) Duha  
11:44.....Dhuhr  
14:33.....Asr  
16:56.....Maghreb  
18:18.....Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590  
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366.

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 713331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Armenian International Church Tel. 824328.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457.

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

### WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology  
Warm weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate. In Agaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

**Min./Max. temp.**  
Amman .....06/20  
Agaba .....11/25  
Deserts .....05/21

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Jordan Valley .....12/26

Yesterday's high temperatures:  
Amman 20, Agaba 25 Humidity readings: Amman 44 per cent, Agaba 35 per cent.

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**NIGHT DUTY**  
AMMAN:  
Dr. Ghazi Abu Sheikha .....752405  
Dr. Fadel Al Khateeb .....865456  
Dr. Yousef Al Faqih .....790104  
Dr. Mukhlis Halaseh 819220  
Ferdows pharmacy .....778336  
Al Asema pharmacy .....637055  
Nairoukh pharmacy .....623672  
Al Salam pharmacy .....636730  
Yacoub pharmacy .....644945  
Shmeisani pharmacy .....637660  
Nairoukh pharmacy .....847632  
IRBID:  
Dr. Ghazi Tamash .....250080  
Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)  
ZARQA:  
Dr. Faded Jaber .....984549  
Khalifeh pharmacy .....983417

### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre .....637111  
Civil Defence Department .....607071  
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue

630341  
Civil Defence Emergency .....199  
Rescue Police .....621111/637777  
Fire Brigade .....617101  
Blood Bank .....775121  
Highway Police .....843402  
Traffic Police .....896390  
Public Security Dept. ....630321  
Hotel Complaints .....605800  
Price Complaints .....661176  
Water & Sewage Complaints .....897467  
Amman Municipality Complaints .....787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) .....121  
Overseas Calls .....010230  
Central Amman Telephone Repairs .....623101  
Abdali Tel. Repairs .....661101  
Jordan Television .....773111  
Radio Jordan .....774111  
Water Authority .....680100  
J. Electricity Authority .....815615  
Electric Power Co. ....636381  
RJ Flight Information .....08-53200  
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

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Electric Power Co. ....636381  
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Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

### HOSPITAL

AMMAN:  
Hussein Medical Centre .....8181332  
Khalidi Maternity .....644281/6  
Alkhil Maternity .....642441/2  
Jabal Amman Maternity .....642362  
Malhas, J. Amman .....636140  
Palestine, Shmeisani .....607071  
Shmeisani Hospital .....669131

University Hospital .....845845  
Al-Muasher Hospital .....667227/9  
The Islamic, Abdali .....666126/37  
Al-Ahli, Abdali .....664164/6  
Italian, Al-Muhajreen .....77101/3  
Al-Bashir .....775111/26  
Army, Marka .....891611/15  
Queen Alia Hospital .....602240/50  
Amal Hospital .....674155  
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery .....865199

630341  
Civil Defence Emergency .....199  
Rescue Police .....621111/637777  
Fire Brigade .....617101  
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Fire Brigade .....617101



Greek coast guard caught 50  
break into Greece in two boats  
key early Saturday and three  
arrested. The coast guard said  
slightly wounded by warning  
the two boats refused to stop  
were taken into custody in  
on the boat they were in cap-  
spotted in the narrow channel  
Turkey in the southern part  
of Rhodes. Later, the coast  
1 boat carrying 13 Iraqi Kurds  
Ro, also near Rhodes. The alien  
taken into custody and one of  
the wounded by the warning shot  
is expected to seek political  
be taken to a United Nations  
ens within the next few days.

#### mutinous Russian ship

The Turkish coast guard  
Saturday after a mutiny by  
e Anatolia news agency said  
ptain, the machinist and a radio  
in a cabin by the 14-Croatian  
an Chernyn after the captain  
ted to replace the crew, the pri-  
reported. The coast guard  
Black Sea near Istanbul after  
1, Anatolia said. There was no  
e of the Russians. The Croatian  
nt back to Croatia, the agency  
had been travelling from Bul-  
Spain.

#### ited to tournament in Iran

Iran has invited Israel's fencing  
an international tournament held  
first time the Jewish state has  
athletes to Iran in 22 years, the  
don said on Sunday. An official  
ammad Zadeh, vice-president of  
association and chairman of the  
international fencing change-  
m arrived in an envelope of the  
small fencing federation and a  
nation embassy in the French cap-  
l. Uri Karim, president of the  
ation, told reporters on Sunday  
foreign ministry for guidance  
not to accept the invitation. The  
tes performed in Iran was a de-  
years before the revolution led  
allah Khomeini. Israel has re-  
of supporting militant violence  
state both by Palestinian and

#### S. economic talks

trade between the countries  
ak's trip, at the invitation of the  
asury Department, is seen as  
an opportunity for both coun-  
g between the two allies.  
sh press reports have said the US  
in invited to discuss Turkey's  
blems, which include political  
flation that registered 50 per cent  
ndly agreement to implement  
an austerity programme in 1997  
sion of the International Monetary  
MF, signed in July 1996, expires  
y 1996 with part of a new agree-  
ase of a government credit  
dak, accompanied by Turkey's  
nk Governor Cevdet Yildirim, will  
meet with IMF officials in  
Rialat.  
all also hold talks with private  
ks in New York, Anatolia said.

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## Zaire: Soldiers accused in rampages to face tribunals

KINSHASA (AP) —

Zaire's government declared a disaster zone in a northern province and said six soldiers would face trial on charges of looting towns and attacking civilians as they fled advancing rebels.

The announcement on state-run television Friday night followed a civilian group's allegations that about 60 civilians had been killed and scores of towns attacked by the very soldiers that were supposed to be defending Zairian territory.

The group's statement was presented to the government last week, along with demands for punishment of soldiers implicated in the violence. The chief government spokesman, Koloni Longo, said six

army officers would appear before special military tribunals on various charges, ranging from desertion to looting and rape.

He described the accused as "uncontrolled elements" of the army, the same term the government used last month when it acknowledged that retreating soldiers had looted the town of Beni and left at least 10 people dead before fleeing the rebels.

Because of damage from the rampages and in an effort to control further unrest, the province of Upper Zaire has been declared a disaster zone, Mr. Koloni said. The vast province is on the northern edge of Zaire along the border with Sudan and is outside the immediate area of

fighting, but it is where Zairian soldiers fleeing the rebels have headed.

The declaration of a disaster zone means an increased military presence in the area to contain unrest.

The dates and exact locations of the promised tribunals were not announced. On Thursday, an organization representing civilians in the affected area released a communique demanding government action to "stop the tyranny" that erupted after the rebel incursion began along Zaire's eastern border in October.

The Zairian government has in the past acknowledged some looting by troops as they fled the rebels, and a new army chief appointed last month was expected to crack down

on the rampaging soldiers.

The civilian representatives, who come from the Eastern Kivu regions and included some government and military representatives, said victims of the looting spree included refugees fleeing the violence who had been murdered, and young girls who had been raped.

Hospitals, churches, businesses and parishes have been looted and destroyed in recent months, the statement said.

There was no independent confirmation of the allegations of some 60 civilian deaths and no details given of the killings, but people in towns affected by the fighting have also described violent rampages by retreating Zairian troops.



Divers of Japan's Maritime Safety Agency (MSA) land on the bow of the ruptured Russian tanker Nadhodka from a MSA helicopter to check condition of the broken vessel in preparation for removal in Japanese northwestern coastline town of Mikuni (Reuters photo)

## Japan keeps oil spill from nuclear plants

MAIZURU, Japan (R) —

Workers from Japan's Maritime Agency successfully kept globs of heavy oil leaking out of a ruptured tanker from fouling the operations of the world's largest concentration of nuclear reactors Sunday.

Oil from the Russian tanker drifted close to the 15 nuclear reactors lying along Wakasa Bay, but oil fences and cleanup operations succeeded in keeping the oil from the important intake pipes providing reactor cooling water, a spokesman said.

"About 10 MSA ships spent Sunday gathering oil clumps that had gathered at the oil fences surrounding Wakasa Bay," the agency official told reporters.

The cleanup operation, the biggest ever in Japan, is spread across a 450 kilometre stretch of the coast. But officials are now concentrating efforts on keeping the oil away from the vital power plants.

An official with Kansai Electric Co., which operates 11 reactors along the bay, said a five-metre wide slick at the outer line of the oil fences, some 200 metres from the reactor's water intake pipes.

The sighting was probably the vanguard of a 500-metre wide oil slick the utility

company had earlier spotted.

Nuclear power plant officials said there was no danger of a meltdown even if oil were to enter the intake pipes. They said that the system could tolerate small amounts of oil and at worst they would have to suspend power generation.

Maritime officials still have no firm figure on how much oil has escaped from the 13,157-tonne, tanker Nakhodka when it broke up in stormy seas on Jan. 2.

They admit that the earlier estimate of 3,700 tonnes (26,000 barrels) was too low. The 26-year old tanker was carrying 19,000 tonnes (133,000 barrels) of fuel oil.

A newly discovered band of oil, 18 kilometres long and 200 metres wide, was spotted 40 kilometres east of where the Russian tanker is thought to have sunk after splitting in half in heavy seas.

The new band, which was breaking up in heavy seas, raised fears of new oil flows from the sunken stern of the vessel, thought to be on the seabed at least 1 kilometre under water.

The MSA Sunday succeeded in putting an oil fence around the bow of the boat, which has stranded ashore, the agency official added.

Aside from tanks ruptured

when the tanker split in two, divers found no new tears in the bow. There were also no new outflows of oil and no new oil on the sea bed, the agency official said.

"However, it is still not clear whether the bow is empty or whether the flow has stopped for now," the spokesman said.

A Russian oil cleaning ship, the first of two promised by the Russian government, was on its way to the oil-struck area after being dispatched from the Pacific island of Sakhalin.

The ship is specially designed to filter oil from seawater.

Hundreds of volunteers have flocked to the areas already hit, which include some of the most fertile fishing grounds in Japan, to help in the dirty job of gathering the oil from shorelines.

With little more than buckets and scoops, they braved snow, sleet and cold temperatures. But medical experts said caution should be taken following reports of nausea, rashes and other ailments from some volunteers.

They said that the oil contains some toxic elements and that many of those on the beaches had failed to use masks or goggles to protect themselves.

## 'Unexplained event' reported before Detroit plane crash

RAISINVILLE TOWN-

SHIP, Michigan (R) — Investigators of Thursday's Delta Comair crash were trying to determine Saturday the nature of what they called "an unexplained event" shortly before the plane plummeted to the ground killing 29 people.

"Approximately one minute after leveling off at 4,000 feet (1,200 metres) an unexplained event took place, normal operations ceased and the airplane crashed shortly thereafter," John Hammerschmidt, the National Transportation Safety Board chief spokesman told a news conference.

"At this juncture, it is an event we are trying to understand," he added.

NTSB investigators said they had determined something happened from listening to the "black box" cockpit voice recorder, but they refused to tell reporters what the pilots said.

Investigators were still reviewing the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder boxes at their laboratory in Washington D.C., said Mr. Hammerschmidt, who added that nothing had been ruled out in trying to determine the cause.

The cockpit voice recorder indicated an uneventful routine orderly businesslike flight," he added.

Flight 3272 was enroute to Detroit from Cincinnati when it went down about 40 kilometres south of the airport in rural Monroe County in southeast Michigan Thursday, killing 28 adults and one infant.

Mr. Hammerschmidt said eye-witnesses reported seeing the plane's wings rock before it plunged out of the sky.

He said there was apparently a large amount of wing rocking after which the plane briefly stabilised.

"They all indicated that the airplane stabilised, then the nose of the aircraft abruptly pitched down and descended vertically to the ground," he said.

Mr. Hammerschmidt said the NTSB had learned that 20 minutes after the crash the pilot of a DC3 aircraft reported

icing 25 miles southwest of Detroit Airport.

He said the previous crew of the doomed plane had on at least two occasions earlier in the day successfully used the entire de-icing system of the plane.

He said there were no strong winds at the time of the accident, cloud cover was at 1,500 feet (457 metres) and visibility was one to three miles (1.6 to 4.8 km).

Capt. Dann Carlsen had a total of 5,329 flight hours and his co-pilot Ken Reece 2,582 hours, Mr. Hammerschmidt said, adding both "were reported to be very good pilots."

Both engines of the plane showed they were rotating and working on impact and all eight power blades showed damage consistent with fact they were rotating on impact.

## Major arrives in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (AP) —

British Prime Minister John Major arrived in Islamabad Sunday at the start of a three-day visit expected to focus on expanding bilateral trade and economic ties, officials here said.

Mr. Major's visit had been planned by the government of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the two countries decided to go ahead despite the removal of her government for corruption and misrule on Nov. 5.

The British prime minister, who is leading a high-level business delegation, will hold formal talks with Interim Prime Minister Malik Meraj Khalid and also meet President Farooq Ahmed Leghari, officials said.

They will discuss the war in neighboring Afghanistan and the lingering India-Pakistan dispute over the Himalayan state of Kashmir, among other matters, they said.

He will also have separate meetings with Ms. Bhutto and her key political rival and former Premier Nawaz Sharif, diplomatic sources said.

Mr. Major, who is the first British prime minister to visit Pakistan since Margaret Thatcher's trip in 1981, arrived here only three weeks before the new Pakistani elections set for Feb. 3.

No meeting has been planned between Mr. Major and former cricket hero Imran Khan, who is another aspirant for Pakistan's prime ministership, diplomatic sources said.

Mr. Major will also visit the northwestern Peshawar city bordering Afghanistan and meet Pakistani businessmen in Lahore Tuesday before returning home, they said.

Mr. Major ended a visit to Bangladesh Sunday, slamming the double standards of rich nations who provide aid to poor countries but block them from their markets.

Mr. Major said it was "immoral" for rich countries to give help and then close their markets.

Help "should be given" on the basis of openness (and) there should be free trade," he said at a farewell banquet hosted by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed.

Mr. Major added: "My country is determined, both nationally and in the European Union and the World Trade Organisation that tariff and non-tariff barriers of trade should be dismantled as comprehensively and speedily as it can be done."

Mr. Major was accompanied by his wife Norma and some 50 British business executives on the second leg of the tour, which started in India.

He highlighted the "need for a stable political background which encourages investors from abroad. It also reassures the investors that the future of Bangladesh is a future of improvement and democracy."

The prime minister added: "Trade is vital not to enrich the merchants, but to change society and (the) socio-economic condition of the people. It has got a trickle-down effect in society."

Sheikh Hasina replied that Bangladesh "hopes to achieve sustained economic development on the basis of a thriving market economy."

Mr. Major was the first British premier to visit Dhaka in more than 20 years, and during official talks Saturday, Mr. Major and Sheikh Hasina agreed to further strengthen economic and political relations.

## New labour clashes erupt in South Korea as hints of compromise emerge

SEOUL (AFP) —

Riot police fired tear gas Sunday to break up violent protests in Seoul against a new labour law amid signs that the government is seeking a compromise to head off deepening labour unrest.

Clashes erupted outside Myeongdong Cathedral after police again tried to enter the church grounds to serve arrest warrants for seven union leaders leading strikes against the law.

Workers blocked the police, and the warrants were not served. But later, when hundreds of workers and students tried to move towards the cathedral from nearby streets, riot police bombarded them with tear-gas.

The demonstrators fought back with steel pipes and rocks, shouting "down with (President) Kim Young-Sam."

The one-hour-long street battle came as the ruling party reportedly struggled to draw up appeasement measures, including a new bill to protect workers, and to counteract damaging publicity overseas.

Unions charge that the law, railroaded through parliament on Dec. 26, gives employers a freer hand to fire workers and extend working hours. It also outlaws the fledgling Korean Confederation of Trade

Unions (KCTU) until 2000.

Hints at compromise on the government side followed the arrival of four delegates from the Brussels-based International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Saturday to express solidarity with workers here.

But the unions appeared more hardline. "We can sit down for talks on amending the new law only after the government declares its nullification," KCTU leader Kwon Young-Kil said Sunday.

He challenged the president to give a clear commitment before a Jan. 14 deadline or face "all-out" strike action.

On Sunday, the KCTU head again rejected as a "farce" an offer by ruling party leader Lee Hong-Koo to hold a televised debate on the standoff, which has caused production losses of \$2.24 billion in 18 days.

Mr. Kwon's group and the bigger Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) have threatened to bring the country to a halt with public sector strikes on Jan. 14 and 15 unless the law is repealed.

Marcello Malentacchi, general secretary of the International Metal Workers' Union, pledged an international campaign against the new law, asking ICFTU

members to deluge South Korean embassies with protest letters.

"I don't see any solution very soon," Mr. Malentacchi said.

The ICFTU delegation, headed by John Evans from a union advisory committee to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), supported union charges that the new law violated international Labour Organisation norms.

At a Sunday mass in the cathedral, Cardinal Stephen Kim, head of the country's two-million Roman Catholics, called on all sides in the dispute to seek dialogue. "Politicians, employers and workers all should try to head off the current crisis through dialogue," the cardinal said.

In the southern industrial city of Ulsan, 5,000 workers from the giant Hyundai Conglomerate held a mass rally to protest a lockout.

Lee Young-Hee, head of the Hyundai Group Union, threatened "all-out" anti-government protests unless President Kim Young-Sam repealed the law.

The Hyundai Auto Plant closed down last week after a 34-year-old worker tried to burn himself to death during a protest march. The worker suffered multiple burns, but lived.

## Shuttle launched on mission to Mir

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (R) —

The space shuttle Atlantis headed for a rendezvous with Russia's Mir station Sunday, blasting off its Florida launch pad in a dazzling light show that could be seen for hundreds of miles.

The \$2 billion spaceship lifted off precisely on time at 4:27 a.m. est (0927 GMT), destined for its fifth link-up with the Mir orbiting complex.

"Looks like a good morning to launch," said launch director Jim Harrington in the final minutes of a trouble-free countdown.

The shuttle was still visible from viewing sites at the Kennedy Space Centre nearly eight minutes after launch when it was about 300 miles (480 kilometres) out, 70 miles (110 kilometres) above the Atlantic.

NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin and Russian space officials toasted the successful blastoff with vodka. Alcohol is normally prohibited at the launch site.

Shortly after reaching orbit, Atlantis began a 66-hour chase through space to catch up with Mir. At the time of the liftoff, the space station was orbiting high above the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific.

Aboard Mir, cosmonauts Valeri Korzun and Alexander Kaleri, along with U.S. astronaut John Blaha, watched a replay of the launch beamed up to them from Russian mission control near Moscow.

Atlantis was scheduled to dock with Mir Tuesday night to pick up Blaha and drop off his replacement, Jerry Linenger.

Blaha, who has been aboard the space outpost since September, said he was looking forward to returning to Earth and being reunited with his wife.

"The first thing I'm going to do is meet my wife. I'm going to hug her and kiss her real big, and take it from there," he said.

Linenger, a navy captain and medical doctor, would become the fourth U.S. astronaut to live aboard the Russian space station.

At the age of 41, he is the youngest American to embark on a mission to Mir and also the least experienced, with only one 11-day shuttle flight to his name.

During his four-month flight he will perform more than 80 experiments and make a six-hour spacewalk, the first from Mir by a U.S. astronaut.

Atlantis is scheduled to return to Mir in May to bring Linenger home. He is hoping to be back on Earth in time for the birth of his second child, due in late June.

Joining Linenger aboard Atlantis was Mission Commander Mike Baker, copilot Brent Jett and mission specialists Jeff Wisooff, John Grunsfeld and Marsha Ivins.

## Bulgaria opposition urge more protests

SOFIA (R) —

Bulgaria's opposition, spurred by economic crisis and soaring inflation, called a seventh day of protests for Sunday, but the ex-Communist ruling Socialist Party rejected their demands for an early general election.

A two-day opposition siege of the parliament building, in what amounted to the worst political upheaval since the end of communism in 1989, followed a refusal Friday by the Socialists to vote a motion for a new election.

The opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) walked out of parliament and urged a nationwide strike and a campaign of civil disobedience.

In an increasingly complex political situation, the outgoing government of resigned Socialist Premier Zhan Videnov responded to outgoing President Zhelyu Zhelev's refusal to let it form a new cabinet by rejecting a general election.

Security forces wielding clubs dispersed protesters early Saturday, ending a 10-hour siege of parliament with what a government statement described as "minimal use of force."

Hours later about 500 opposition supporters began a fresh rally outside Sofia's gold-domed Bulgarian Orthodox Cathedral.

But clashes erupted outside the presidency building and demonstrators continued to rally peacefully in front of Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, repeat-

ing their demands for early elections.

The government said a total of 196 people had been treated in hospital after clashes Friday and Saturday. The opposition counted 270 injured.

"We will continue protests until we win and the Socialists agree on early elections," said UDF leader Ivan Kostov.

Later Friday he urged demonstrators to go home and come back on Sunday afternoon. "Early elections can not be attained in a night. Your forces and persistence will be needed in a long run," said Mr. Kostov.

Crisis talks between Mr. Zhelev and political and security chiefs, including opposition leaders, ended without agreement. Jordan Sokolov, UDF parliamentary leader of the opposition said they might no longer be able to control the protests.

"There will be early parliamentary elections this year in any event," the president said in a televised address. "Let them be organised and conducted in a civilised and cultural manner by the politicians as befits a European state."

The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), largely composed of ex-Communists, are half way through their parliamentary term but have lost a great deal of authority as the economy worsens. Month-on-month inflation soared 26.9 per cent in December from just over nine per cent in November after a series of

price increases on basic food and fuel items.

Voters delivered a powerful no-confidence vote two months ago by electing opposition lawyer Petar Stoyanov as president with 60 per cent of the vote. He will be sworn in on Jan. 19.

"If the BSP sees this (the protests) as a state coup, the united opposition sees it as a justified wrath of people who took to the streets because they are hungry and see no future for themselves," President-Elect Stoyanov told reporters.

"I asked ambassadors what would the citizens of their countries do if their monthly wages were between \$16 and \$20 and the price of bread is \$0.5," Mr. Stoyanov said after meeting Western ambassadors in Sofia.

A quarter of Bulgaria's banks are in receivership and triple-digit annual inflation has slashed away at real incomes.

"These people are out on the streets not for political motives but for economic ones. The issue is to sit at a table and negotiate," Mr. Stoyanov said.

When parliament approves a new cabinet the International Monetary Fund plans to negotiate implementation of a tough fixed exchange regime as a last resort to restore confidence in the crumbling economy.

Michael Portillo warned Bosnia's reconstruction aid depends on progress in peace talks.

"Yes, there are pressures that are pushing us on a visit to Bosnia," he said on a visit to Bosnia's political progress.

He praised political progress but said peace was impossible unless war crimes were not arrested.

"We cannot expect an enduring peace unless war crimes are not arrested," he said.

Mr. Portillo, who is leading a high-level business delegation, will hold formal talks with Interim Prime Minister Malik Meraj Khalid and also meet President Farooq Ahmed Leghari, officials said.

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### Gaza trip at critical point

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's visit to Gaza yesterday and his talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat need to be viewed in the context of the "crisis stage" at which the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations have arrived. All indications point to a hidden, at best indirect, decision by the Israeli government to effectively "torpedo" the Oslo accords, a grave development that can be held responsible for the rapid deterioration in peace efforts in the Middle East. At a time when U.S. envoy Dennis Ross confirmed that the issue over Israeli troops' redeployment from or in Hebron was "basically" resolved, a critical obstacle arose over the further stages of withdrawal from the rest of the Palestinian territories as specifically and clearly called for by the Oslo agreements. This came about when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu openly called for delaying the completion of the pullouts by two years.

This latest exposure of the true intents of the Likud-led government came in open contrast with its earlier protestations that it would honour all past agreements with the Arab side. In fact, the reopening of the Hebron file by Netanyahu gave credence to long-held Arab suspicions that the headline government in Israel was bent on dishonouring its commitments to the Palestinians. Israeli Minister of Infrastructure Ariel Sharon was more blunt and straightforward than his colleagues when he openly and arrogantly called for renegotiating the entire Oslo deal. Sharon's demands were first dismissed as coming from a sworn extremist. But when Netanyahu himself joined the chorus of Israeli hardliners calling for reopening the Oslo file altogether, the picture that emerged could only fuel fears that the peace process was fast reaching a crisis point.

The Israeli government showed the true colour of its stance on negotiations with the Palestinians when 10 of its members reportedly expressed total opposition to withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza Strip according to the articles of the signed autonomy accords. Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani even made the claim that the projected redeployment would be "suicidal for Israel."

What added insult to injury was when Ross's interventions to save the day proved ineffective, probably because they were either not firm enough or not equitably conceived. The minute the U.S. envoy proposed a compromise over the target dates for the future redeployments, he in effect gave a signal to the Israelis that the original schedules for the completion of the withdrawals are not sacrosanct and can be renegotiated. Against this backdrop, the U.S.' latest moves suggest that Washington is developing a biased perspective in favour of Israel even though the Oslo agreements were signed and sealed with President Bill Clinton's personal blessings.

As a matter of fact, the talks on Hebron dragged for so long in order to articulate a protocol which is not in total accordance with the original Oslo accords because Washington appeared to be wavering on the issue and more accommodating than it could or should be over new Israeli demands. Once the Hebron file was reopened, thanks or no thanks to the U.S.' new stance, there was no way to stop the reopening of all other features of the painstakingly negotiated Oslo deal.

This new alarming situation rolls the ball back in the American court. The only way to salvage the peace process from total collapse is for Washington to insist on honouring completely all agreements between Israel and the Arab parties. If Netanyahu wants to be faithful to his earlier commitments to his people and the rest of the world but cannot because of opposition from right-wing elements in his own team he has the choice of forming a national unity government which can sustain the peace effort and save us all from the mess that lies around the corner as things stand now.

### ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Dustour warned against allowing a handful of wealthy businessmen to take control of the national economy, saying that the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few does not augur well for the country's future. Bilal Tall said that many economists in Jordan have been warning that some 200 wealthy people control more than 90 per cent of the nation's wealth and steer the economy in a manner that only benefits their own interests. This constitutes a grave danger that can only result in the poor becoming poorer and the rich becoming richer, as the middle class continues to diminish, said the writer. The very rich should not be allowed to control most of the shares in public companies and the government must step in and ensure that a ceiling is set for ownership of shares, otherwise the destiny of most firms will be at the mercy of the whims and desires of the wealthy, he said. The writer suggested that the government help ensure fair and equitable distribution of wealth and that a series of economic and social measures should be introduced that would prevent the rich from assuming the status of decision makers in the country; else the interest of the majority of people will be...

### Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

## Will an Arab free trade area become a reality soon?

A FEW days ago, representatives of Arab businesses met for three days in Amman and discussed the possibilities of Arab cooperation in all areas of trade. The question of a free trade area surfaced in several presentations made. Will Arab cooperation ever rise to a free area or, better still, a customs union? Not in the near future.

One must recall, for starters, that inter-Arab trade makes up under 10 per cent of the total trade in the area. On the other hand, trade between Arabs and the Western countries constitutes 90 per cent of total trade. Given the slogans of brotherhood and solidarity among Arabs, is this trade imbalance an anomaly? Well, something must be wrong to cause such a trade preference for the West, which, to say the least, is not close to the Arab World in terms of culture, history, religion or heritage. In fact, the West and the Middle East were only close whenever fleeing mutual benefits arose.

But have inter-Arab relations been close? Not in the recent past, as empirical fact and immediate history would attest. Therefore, maybe there is no anomaly here. Maybe inter-Arab relations are weak. This is one distinct possibility.

Let us consider the status of Arab expatriates in the countries of the Arab Gulf. None of the oil rich countries allows the marriage of their nationals to Arabs from other countries. Mixed marriages are rare and occur under very special conditions, requiring special permits which are never easy to obtain. Entry of the spouse into these Gulf countries, to reside and work, is equally difficult. Arab labourers in most of the countries of the Gulf are not allowed to invest savings directly in the host country. Investment must be done through a national of the host country. Therefore, Arab expatriates in the Gulf remit their savings to their home countries. Thus, the oil rich states lose a major portion of potential savings every year and borrow from the West to finance investment.

Simultaneously, the remittances to the expatriates' countries help create an upward pressure on domestic prices because the aggregate money stock outpaces the domestic product, thereby making money more abundant relative to goods and services. Interestingly enough, both countries hurt.

In fact, the relationship between most Arab labourers with their host countries is reminiscent of the serf-land-

lord relationship of centuries ago. Arab labour in these countries is insecure and has no incentive other than pay to stay in these countries. For example, in 1984, a rumour that the Sultanate of Brunei was accepting applications for work from Arab workers caused a stampede of 500,000 applications at the British Consulate which was the representative of Brunei in Saudi Arabia. Obviously, the so-called Arab brotherhood did not mean much to the applicants who were willing to go to a place most of them had never heard of before.

On the other hand, an Arab labourer who works in the West can marry, buy a house, start a business, vote, study and practise almost all the rights of the regular citizen. The West ends up nourishing the human capital of these workers and benefiting from their intellect and savings; as a result, they stay in the West. Could it be that Arabs are closer to the West than they are to each other? I wonder.

Another possible explanation for the trade anomaly is that Arab countries have similar needs, produce similar products and utilise similar processes. Thus, the majority of Arab trade is with the West because inter-Arab trade could not provide merchants with the necessary goods and services at the required prices and quality.

Furthermore, many of the wealthy Arab countries view a free trade inter-Arab area as a first step towards an economic union, which is something their nations fear. An economic union allows for the free movement of production factors among the member states. This means that whatever income advantage is enjoyed by the rich countries' nationals, due to high oil revenues that are distributed among small populations, will be gone. The population will increase in areas of high wages as labourers migrate in search of better pay. The migration will stop only when incomes are almost identical in all Arab countries. Understandably, such a notion is attractive only to the poor and not to the rich.

Can the anomaly in trade be corrected in the short run? Not likely. Not unless laws and regulations change to make the flow of labour and capital among the Arab countries freer and unless production improves to offer first-rate Arab know-how and knowledge-intensive products. Until these changes are effected, the Arab market will remain a conference topic.

## Legalising drugs would harm young people in Europe

By Joseph A. Califano Jr.

NEW YORK — Emma Bonino, the European commissioner for consumer policy, wants legalisation of "soft drugs" throughout the European Union. Her argument perpetuates old myths and ignores uncomfortable realities. Legalisation would be a disaster for European children and teenagers.

Myth No. 1: The Netherlands has a successful drug legalisation policy. The Dutch have not technically legalised drugs, but they permit marijuana coffee shops to sell cannabis products for personal consumption. This policy has harmed youngsters. From 1984 to 1992, marijuana use by Dutch adolescents jumped nearly 200 per cent.

Dutch officials and citizens have expressed alarm about rising use of marijuana among minors and increasing crime and drug tourism. As a result, parliament has moved to cut in half the number of marijuana coffee houses, raise the minimum age requirement for purchasing cannabis from 16 or 18, and reduced the amount of marijuana that an individual can buy from 30 grammes to 5 grammes.

Myth No. 2: Legalisation would decrease drug-related crime in Europe. Not so. Any short-term reduction in arrests after a repeal of criminal drug laws would quickly evaporate as drug use increased and the criminal conduct — assault, murder, rape, child molestation, violence, vandalism — that drug use spawns exploded.

The U.S. Department of Justice has found that criminals commit six times as many homicides, four times as many assaults and almost one and a half times as many robberies under the influence of drugs as they commit in order to get money to buy drugs. European health, welfare and criminal justice costs would rocket if drugs were legalised.

Mrs. Bonino's argument that adoption of the Dutch policies by the European Union would reduce crime is contradicted by the Netherlands' own experience. The justice ministry acknowledges a steady increase in drug-related crime during the past decade. From 1981 to 1992 there was a 60 per cent increase in crime, most of it property crime. Despite strict gun con-

trol laws, gun-related deaths increased from 73 in 1991 to more than 100 in 1992, virtually all of them drug-related. By 1994, Amsterdam had twice as many police officers relative to its population as the average American city.

Myth No. 3: Legalisation would help to eliminate black markets and contain organised criminal activity. Here again, Dutch experience suggests just the opposite. From 1988 to 1993, the number of organised crime groups in the Netherlands jumped from three to 93.

Myth No. 4: Greater availability and legal acceptability of drugs like marijuana, cocaine and heroin would not increase use. This defies not only experience but human nature. From 1984 to 1992, Dutch adolescent marijuana use nearly tripled. Italy, where personal possession of small quantities of drugs, including heroin, was decriminalised in 1975, has some 300,000 heroin addicts and the highest rate of heroin addiction in Europe.

In the 1970s, the United States de facto decriminalised marijuana. A commission appointed by President Richard Nixon recommended decriminalisation, as did President Jimmy Carter. The result? A soaring increase in use of marijuana, particularly among youngsters.

Myth No. 5: Legalisation would reduce health problems and limit the spread of diseases like AIDS. No way. Beginning in 1987, Switzerland experimented with just such a policy, and the effects were disastrous. The Swiss government designated a public park in Zurich where heroin addicts could use drugs. Public health officials distributed free needles, condoms, medical care, counselling and offers of treatment in what soon became known as Needle Park. By 1992, the number of addicts had rocketed to 20,000.

The city's chief medical officer reported that doctors were resuscitating an average of 12 people a day who had overdosed, up to 40 on some days; in 1991, 81 drug-related deaths were recorded, twice as many as the previous year. The Swiss closed down the park. Mrs. Bonino's claim that legalising drugs would limit the incidence of AIDS is contrary to her own country's experience. In Italy, with per-

sonal possession of small quantities of drugs decriminalised, 70 per cent of AIDS cases are attributable to drug use.

Myth No. 6: Legalisation would be only for adults; legalised drugs would not be made available to children. In the Netherlands, more teenagers are using drugs at an earlier age. A 1993 survey by the Dutch National Institute for Alcohol and Drugs reported that drug use among male students aged 12 to 18 had increased by more than 250 per cent since 1984.

Nothing in the experience of any free nation gives any credence to its ability to keep legal drugs out of the hands of children. In the United States, it is illegal for children to purchase cigarettes, beer and alcohol, yet today 4.5 million adolescents smoke and 4.7 million underage Americans drink.

History and research demonstrate that legalisation would increase the number of drug users and drug-related crimes — and have a savage impact on the physical, intellectual and emotional development of European children.

The writer, president of the National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse, at Columbia University in New York, was U.S. secretary of health, education and welfare from 1977 to 1979. The above article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

### LETTERS

#### Housing sector also needs subsidy

To the Editor:

EXACTLY AS the government is subsidising some essential foodstuff, like bread, sugar, rice and milk, I would suggest that the government subsidise housing activities in certain locations in Jordan. The purpose should be to encourage people who live in remote areas of the country to develop their local communities instead of migrating to already heavily populated areas like Amman and Zarqa.

Unlike the existing types of subsidies, the only criterion to determine beneficiaries should be the location where houses are to be built and not the financial status. For this purpose, the country can be divided into four major zones: A, B, C, and D. For example, Zone A would consist of the least developed areas in the country, like the Badia and remote villages in the south. The southern cities of the country, like Tafleeh, Ma'an and Karak (with the exception of the port city of Aqaba), and the remote villages in the north and in the middle of the country could constitute zone B. Zone C might be major cities, like Irbid, Jerash, Salt, etc. Zone D might consist of the greater area of Amman and Zarqa. It is not hard to guess that zone A gets most of the subsidy while zone D gets nothing.

The major question is where to get the money from? Actually no allocation of money is required. It is only required that the government give up some of its revenue, generated from building activities in these zones. The government is then compensated by developing these zones, which generates new economic activities and, in turn, generates new direct taxes and revenues for the government.

Another major benefit could be a reduced pressure on major cities posed by the waves of migrations. In other words, unlike other types of subsidies, the government should not be wasting its money, it would be investing it with very good return.

The way the suggested subsidy works is simple: a citizen who is constructing his dwelling in zone A, for example, buys the needed construction materials, like cement, steel, aggregates, paints, ceramic tiles, etc., from the market at regular prices. The citizen is then refunded for the direct and indirect taxes he paid when he bought the construction materials. Of course a citizen in zone B gets partial refund as well.

Dr. Mohammad Ahmad Hiyassat, University of Jordan, Amman.

### Human Rights File

## Treaties unconstitutionally ratified need validation

By Waleed M. Sadi

THE JORDANIAN Constitution stipulates that in order for treaties which have financial implications or affect the rights of Jordanians, in any way, to be binding, they must be endorsed formally by Parliament and published thereafter in the Official Gazette.

The exact wording of Article 33 reads as follows: "Treaties and agreements which involve financial commitments to the Treasury or affect the public or private rights of Jordanians shall not be valid unless approved by the National Assembly."

Despite this Constitution provision, several international treaties which come within the scope of Article 33 have been ratified by Jordan and it is presumed that they are legally binding even though still wanting from the constitutional perspective.

The list of treaties whose status is effectively in a state of legal limbo includes the over 15 international human rights conventions, among which are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Right of the Child and the Convention Against Torture.

Even the extradition treaty between Jordan and the U.S. is flawed from a constitutional point of view because it was never submitted for parliamentary consideration and endorsement, as called for by Article 33.

From a strictly legal point of view, therefore, all treaties and conventions which are presumed to have the force of law in the country are in fact anything but constitutionally valid.

The first question that comes to mind is why this legal chaos was allowed to take place in the first place. The absence of an international law department anywhere in the government may have led to this situation. Neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor the Ministry of Justice has such departments in place. The prime minister's office is also devoid of any such section.

The second question is what could be done to rectify the serious shortcomings that continue to exist in the country with regard to several international treaties and conventions which the international community believes are duly ratified and have the effect of law in the country?

Obviously, it would look incongruous to submit a treaty to Parliament after it has already been ratified by His Majesty the King. Publishing it in the Official Gazette even belatedly is the easiest thing to do with minimum fanfare, embarrassment or damage to the image of the country.

The real problem rests with the constitutional requirement for parliamentary action before any treaties are truly binding on the

country. Here there are no easy answers. In this vein, there are several issues to reckon with.

The most difficult obstacle relates to Parliament's scrutiny of the treaty or treaties in question before they are adopted. I cannot imagine Parliament going through several controversial conventions without touching upon the hardcore issues in them that could prove most vexing, to say the least.

The treaties in question affect Jordanian rights and privileges in meaningful ways. I am not sure we have in place a national consensus on many of their stipulations.

The human rights conventions, in particular, could trigger prolonged, heated debates. The level of pluralistic democracy and the standard of human rights called for by many of them are so high and advanced that the country may not feel ready, as yet, to commit itself to them.

The time factor is also something to think about. Some of the affected treaties are rather bulky. Adopting their various provisions would be as tedious and demanding as the adoption of any piece of legislation on controversial subjects. I can see infinite problems ahead of us should we decide to submit these treaties to parliamentary consideration and endorsement. There is no easy escape, though, from this legal and political dilemma.

In my modest estimation we have before us a legal crisis of the first order. The simpler course of action is to ask Parliament to be totally understanding and endorse at face value all the treaties in question, in a bulk form and without questions asked. This, indeed, would not be easy to accomplish. The Upper House could be counted upon as sympathetic to the problem, but not the Lower House. We certainly cannot improve in this area of international commitments and must be prepared to accord the subject a top priority and make it the first order of business for the next parliament.

Parliament must act on all flawed treaties, whether bilateral or international. Short of a parliamentary action, the treaties remain invalid, as simple as that. The government must be prepared to rush them through parliament and contain and limit the debate that could ensue by all parliamentary manoeuvres. There may be need to convene restricted sessions of parliament for this purpose, in order to expedite their adoption in the shortest possible time. Meanwhile, the government may adopt them by temporary laws pending their full consideration and adoption when parliament could be assembled for this very purpose.

## Pales

By Michael Jansen

IN A fortnight, interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on Saturday, Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, will be in the United States for a close aide of President Bill Clinton. Arafat will be "personally" involved in promoting the peace process.

We need direct attention to the new Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, to make sure that this peace process in the Middle East does not back on (the) rails, he said, calling upon Clinton to enforce what has been agreed in the peace process.

Mr. Shalhoub laid the blame for the collapse in the peace talks on Israel and said that the U.S. shared in this blame for not insisting that Israel meet its commitments.

I am wondering why we are in a dead end," he said. "We have an agreement with the Israelis. This agreement was signed and

### Israel releases 3 prisoners

(Continued from page 1)

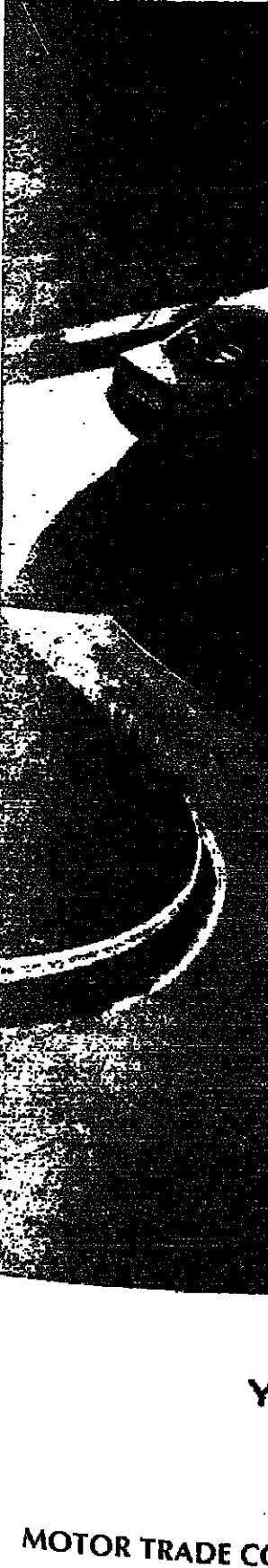
part of the autonomy agreements.

The Israeli president can order the release of prisoners under special pardons issued by himself, but this does not apply to "crimes that involve blood."

Reports in the press shortly said in November 11 Jordanians held in an Israeli jail at Ashkelon and another five at Naffah were threatened a hunger-strike to protest prison conditions and to demand their release in line with the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

No further report was available on the issue.

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Rights File  
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# Palestinians want Clinton 'personally' involved

By Michael Jansen

IN A forthright interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on Saturday, Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian minister of planning and a close aide of President Yasser Arafat, made an energetic plea to U.S. President Bill Clinton to become "personally" involved in promoting the regional process.

"We need direct attention by President Clinton and now the new Secretary of State (Madeleine Albright) to make really sure that this peace process in the Middle East goes back on (the) rails..." he said, calling upon them to enforce what has been agreed in the process.

Dr. Shaath laid the blame for the impasse in the peace talks on Israel and said that the U.S. shared in this blame for not insisting that Israel meet its commitments.

"I am wondering why we are in a dead end," he said. "We have an agreement with the Israelis. This agreement was signed and

consented by the United States at the White House... and in a situation like this the role of the sponsor, the cosignatory, is to make sure that what has been signed is implemented so that we gain enough confidence to move on with the more daunting problems of the permanent settlement."

"Mr. (Dennis) Ross came here to get this thing on the rails but instead of making sure that what has been agreed is implemented, he tried to draw compromises in the middle of the road between what has been agreed by the two parties and what one of the parties wants (to do to) violate (the signed accords). That really is not the way to go about doing it. I think there is still a lot of work to be done but foremost the American sponsors must make sure to the Israelis and us that all commitments made by the two sides must be carried through. That is really the impasse. It is not about wording. It is not about redrafting (to incorporate improvements), it is about sticking to the time sched-

ule that was built into the agreement that was signed last year," Dr. Shaath, who used to teach at the American University of Beirut, proclaimed in his best professorial tone.

Dr. Shaath did not recognise "the gap" between the two sides as "legitimate," thus, belatedly dismissed Mr. Ross's efforts to "narrow" this gap during his three recent protracted visits to the area.

"There is a gap between an agreement and a violation of an agreement. That is not the kind of gap that peace mediators ought to attend to... the gaps mediators usually attend to are between two negotiating positions of an agreement yet to be reached, not an agreement that has been signed."

It is not surprising that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) should take a hard-line on the post-Hebron timetable for implementation of Israeli troop withdrawal from "Area B" and "Area C" once the Hebron redeployment, the last from "Area A", is

accomplished.

The end of the "interim period" of Palestinian self-rule is coming closer while there are no negotiations on the "final status" issues of Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and control of resources.

Here the mathematics of the situation are essential to an understanding of why the Palestinians are sticking to their demand for completion of Israeli redeployment from areas "B" and "C" by September this year and refusing the Israeli demand to postpone until 1998 or 1999 redeployment from "Area C," the third and final stage of withdrawal.

Today the PNA has under its exclusive control only the four to five per cent of the land of the West Bank where the six major towns are located. The authority also exercises limited authority in the villages grouped around these towns, "Area B" and shares responsibility for security with the Israeli army, which has ultimate control.

"Area B" constitutes about 23 per cent of the ter-

ritory of the West Bank. Thus, if the Palestinians secure Israeli redeployment from 80 per cent of Hebron (giving them six and four-fifths of the towns) and from the enclaves of villages designated as "Area B," the authority will hold only about 27 per cent of the land of the West Bank instead of the 85-90 per cent (or "91 per cent" claimed by the authority).

If Israel were to continue to occupy the 60-odd per cent, the countryside, which comprises "Area C" until the end of the "interim period," there is absolutely no guarantee that Israel would ever vacate all or even part of this land. Furthermore Israel could, during the "permanent status" talks over the fate of East Jerusalem and the other fundamental issues, use its control of "Area C," which is the connecting tissue providing continuity in the Palestinian entity, the Palestinians would be confined to a constellation of tight, non-viable enclaves surrounded by Israeli-controlled territory. These

enclaves would be permanently subject to the blackmail of closure and blockade.

Thus, the PNA and Mr. Arafat have no choice but to make their "last stand" on final redeployment. And this is why the Palestinians have brushed off Mr. Ross' so-called "compromise" and appealed to his boss, President Clinton, and to Europe to press Israel to meet its commitments.

But the Palestinians have opted for firmness till very late in the peace process. Almost too late. For Israel has been in violation of the Oslo accords from the very moment the first agreement was signed in September 1993. Israeli violations of the accords did not begin with the formation of the Likud government in June of this year. The original timetable for the pullout gave Israel till March 1994 to evacuate Gaza-Jericho and June 1994 to "redeploy" from the seven towns of the West Bank in preparation for Palestinian council elections due to be held in July.

But the authority allowed those deadlines to be postponed without protest.

As a result the process for granting the Palestinians self-rule in an ever expanding territory was, from the start, allowed to slip while the Israelis busily built their settlements and swallowed up more and more of Jerusalem, in violation of both the spirit and letter of the accords.

These Israeli violations should have been taken up by the Palestinians from the outset and the Americans held to their commitment to guarantee that Israel would honour its signatures, but the authority, ill-prepared to assume its responsibilities and seemingly unaware of the five-year time-scale for completion of the Oslo process, allowed these violations to continue and multiply.

If Israel is guilty of procrastination and consistent violation of the accords, the Palestinians are guilty of allowing Israel to delay and to pick and choose what they are prepared to implement in the accords.

It seems, at last, the sleeping Palestinians have awoken to the fact that time is not on their side and that the Israelis and Americans cannot be trusted to keep their side of the bargain. But this awakening may be too late to save the collapsing peace process from an Israeli government which prefers land to peace and an American sponsor which lacks the will to meet its obligations.

Dr. Shaath's call on Mr. Clinton to intervene personally may prompt the president, preoccupied with cabinet-making and his second inaugural, to make worried noises but it is not likely to result in serious pressure on Israel to honour its commitments.

Mr. Clinton plans to welcome Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Arafat, separately, at the White House at the end of the month but such postponement could mean the death of the peace process.

## Israel releases 3 prisoners

(Continued from page 1)

part of the autonomy agreements.

The Israeli president can order the release of prisoners under special pardons offered by himself, but this does not apply to "crimes that involve blood."

Reports in the press shortly said in November 11 Jordanians held in an Israeli jail at Ashkelon and another five at Naffah were threatening a hunger-strike to protest prison conditions and to demand their release in line with the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

No further report was available on the issue.

## King cancels flight plan

(Continued from page 1)

been trying for months to obtain Israeli permission to open their first airport, seen as an important symbol of sovereignty.

But Israel has refused to let the airport open until the Palestinians agree to give Israeli security forces broad oversight controls over incoming and outgoing passengers and freight.

Israeli officials also say they are concerned the airfield could be used to bring illegal weapons or unauthorised refugees into the Palestinian self-rule areas.

To date only two aircraft have been allowed to land at the airport, an aid flight from Morocco and Mr. Arafat's personal jet, although the Palestinian leader was not aboard the plane at the time.

For his travel, Mr. Arafat drives or flies by helicopter to the nearby Egyptian city of Al Arish, where his personal aircraft is based.

The official Palestinian airlines has also been prevented from using the Rafah airport.

The airline made its inaugural flight over the weekend, taking Palestinian pilgrims to Mecca, but used the Egyptian airport at Port Said for the trip.

## 20 held in bribery scandal in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Twenty public employees in a poor suburb of the Iranian capital have been arrested and remanded in custody for taking bribes, the Iranian press reported Sunday.

They include several officials responsible for security in the working-class area of Robot-Karim, which covers several poor districts south of Tehran. The mayor of the district of Sultan Abad, whose name was not disclosed, is among those being prosecuted.

The Robot-Karim region was the scene of violent protests in April 1995 in which several people died and many were injured. An unknown number of people were also arrested in the demonstrations. The Iranian press frequently mentions such matters as swindles and bribery in state governments.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### 8 detainees freed from Khiam jail

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — Eight Lebanese prisoners were freed on Sunday from Khiam jail in the Israeli-occupied border zone in South Lebanon, the radio station of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) said. One of those released was expelled from the zone while the rest were allowed to return to their homes inside the border area, said Voice of the South radio. The radio said SLA commander Antoine Lahd ordered the releases in a goodwill gesture for the Holy Month of Ramadan. Last February, 32 Lebanese prisoners were freed from Khiam jail. The SLA militia runs the prison under Israeli supervision where some 200 detainees, mostly Lebanese, are held without charge or trial. They are mostly accused of anti-Israeli resistance activities. Human rights groups, particularly London-based Amnesty International, have repeatedly denounced cases of torture and maltreatment at the jail, where the SLA recently allowed family visits and checks by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

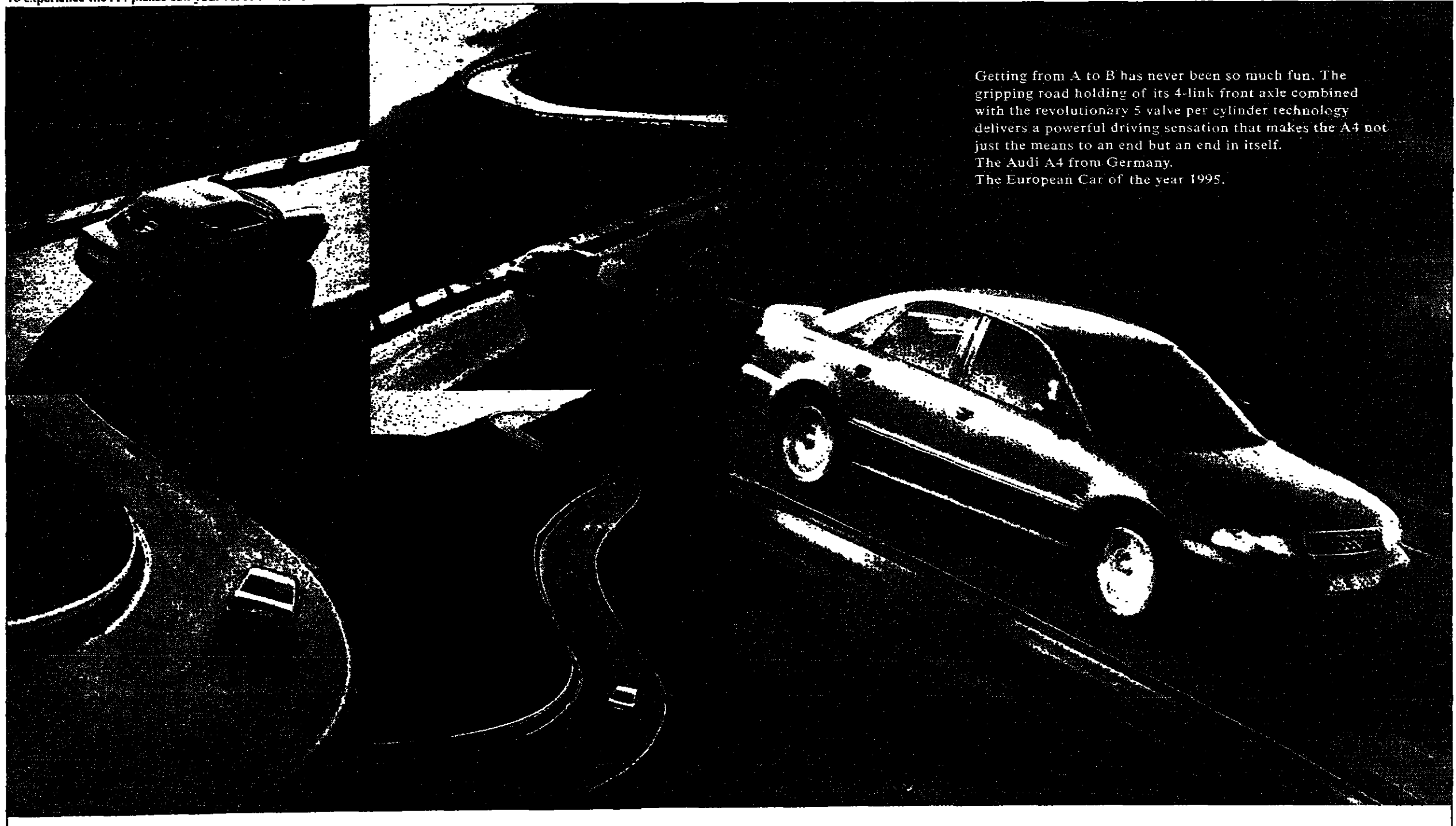
### Saddam advisor dies in 'accident'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An advisor to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein died in an "unfortunate accident," the presidential palace announced on Sunday. A palace statement carried by Baghdad Radio did not list the circumstances of the accident on Saturday that killed Abdullah Fadel Abbas Al Samarra, a former minister of religious affairs. Samarra "held several key posts within the (ruling) Baath Party and the government," and was a member of the Revolutionary Command Council, the country's highest decision-making body, it said.

### French food firms to visit Baghdad

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Business leaders from 50 French agriculture and food firms will visit Iraq later in the month to discuss trade prospects, official newspapers said Sunday. The delegation will meet senior Iraqi officials and take part in a trade fair, Jeannou Lacaze, who chairs the French-Iraqi Trade and Industry Council, told the newspapers. Mr. Lacaze, a former chief-of-staff for France's armed forces who set up the council, made several visits last year to Baghdad where he opened a permanent French trade office.

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## Government, shippers differ on volume of Iraqi imports through Aqaba

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordanian government officials are optimistic that the Red Sea port of Aqaba will get a big boost from the partial lifting of the international embargo against Iraq, but major shippers are not so sure.

Aqaba, Jordan's sole outlet to the sea, was the main trans-shipment point for Iraq during its war with Iran, but has suffered a decline in traffic since the end of the conflict in 1988.

The economic sanctions clamped on Iraq by the United Nations in 1990 after its invasion of Kuwait cut the port's business nearly in half and in 1996, goods destined for Iraq represented a mere five per cent of Aqaba's business.

Some 6.9 million tonnes of goods headed for Iraq passed through Aqaba in 1988, while only 479,000 tonnes of products destined for Iraq passed through the Red Sea port in 1996, according to official figures.

Iraq began exporting oil in December for the first time since the sanctions were imposed and is permitted under resolution 986 to sell \$2 billion in crude every six months to buy food and medicine and pay war reparations.

Jordanian Transport Minister Nasser Lawzi said he expects "at least 50 per cent" or some two million tonnes of Iraqi imports authorised by the U.N. oil-for-food deal, to pass through Aqaba.

He stressed to AFP that "even if Iraq brought one million tonnes of food products through Aqaba, the port's activity would still be below what it was in the 1980s when it handled more than 20 million tonnes a year."

Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said last month that Aqaba and the Gulf port of Um Qasr would be given priority for imports.

While the transport minister and other officials were optimistic about the impact on Aqaba of the partial lifting of sanctions on Iraq, Jordanian shippers were not painting such a rosy picture.

Tawfik Kassar, president of Jordan's largest group of shipping agents, said Jordan will only profit "from a small share of Iraqi imports because of the high cost of using Aqaba, in spite of the recent reduction in rates."

The Jordanian government decided in May to reduce the port's handling rates by 25 per cent and

storage rates by 40 per cent.

"Um Qasr is less costly for Iraq because fees are paid in Iraqi dinars, representing a savings of \$10 to \$15 per tonne," Mr. Kassar said.

He said only "large shipments could transit through Aqaba as Um Qasr can't handle cargoes of more than 25,000 tonnes."

"But in the case of products imported from Italy or the south of France, for example, it would be more practical for Iraq to bring the items through the Turkish port of Iskenderun then transport them to Mosul" in northern Iraq," Mr. Kassar indicated.

Yasser Tall of Jordan's Shipping Lines Company said that Aqaba would play a "negligible" role in fulfilling Iraq's import needs.

"Unless the embargo on Iraq is completely lifted, the situation at Aqaba port will remain precarious and it must seek new outlets," he said.

The Shipping Lines Company transports Jordan's main exports — six million tonnes of phosphate and two million tonnes of potassium annually, as well as nearly two million tonnes of cement and fertilizer a year.

## AMF chairman: Arab reforms to gain momentum

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are expected to step up privatisation programmes as part of overall reforms aimed at tackling their economic problems, the top monetary official in the region said Saturday.

Jassim Al Manai, chairman of the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), said the reforms in most Arab countries had been slow as only between 10 and 15 per cent of the public enterprises have been sold off to the public.

He told the United Arab Emirates (UAE) economic

weekly Al Eqtisadi that excess labour and the need for fiscal and administrative restructuring programmes were among the main factors for the slow pace of reforms.

"In my opinion, there are several factors that will accelerate the privatisation process in the Arab region and giving it a strong momentum that will make a going back difficult," he said.

He said those factors involved the creation of autonomous privatisation bodies in several Arab countries, introduction of better invest-

ment policies, and pressure by businessmen and companies for more privatisations.

Mr. Manai, whose Abu Dhabi-based institution has been involved in a drive to encourage Arab reforms, said he expected the economies of most Arab nations to improve in the coming years due to economic restructuring programmes.

Several Arab states, especially Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco have reported progress in their reforms, aimed at ending decades of government domination on

the economy and tackling such problems as debt, inflation, unemployment, and deficits in the budget and balance of payments.

In the Gulf, most Arab oil producers have launched reforms to repair economic damage caused by weak oil prices over the past decade.

The AMF, a regional IMF-style institution, has started to link its loans to member states with reforms as nearly \$3 billion of financial aid to them produced no results in the absence of sound economic policies.

## Arabs get lion's share of UAE cash aid

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states have received the lion's share of financial aid provided by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since it was created 25 years ago, an official report has showed.

The assistance extended to Arab countries by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) has totalled 5.07 billion dirham (\$1.38 billion) since the fund was set up by the government in 1971, the fund said in a report.

It accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the total aid of 6.35 billion dirhams (\$1.73 billion) provided by the ADFD.

The report did not mention the beneficiaries but fund officials said they included mainly Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria and Jordan.

Asians topped the list of non-Arab beneficiaries, receiving around 512 million dirhams (\$139.5 million), nearly eight per cent. Most of that assistance went to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

The report said the fund also managed 5.49 billion dirhams (\$1.49 billion) in aid and grants extended by the government of Abu Dhabi emirate, the wealthiest member of the UAE.

It said the ADFD's capital, financed mainly from oil exports, stood at 2.13 billion dirhams (\$580 million) at the end of August.

## REUTERS

## REUTERS

### The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.5870	0.5954	1.3735	116.35	1.3483	1542.61	1.7813	5.3530	
DE Mark	0.6301	1.0000	0.8655	73.30	0.8493	971.72	1.1224	3.3728	
GB Sterling	1.5786	2.6675	1.0000	195.05	2.2646	2590.37	2.9819	8.9908	
CHF Franc	0.7281	1.1546	0.4329	84.87	0.9809	1122.31	1.2932	3.6945	
JP Yen	0.0086	1.3634	0.5112	1.1800	1.1583	13.25	153.03	4.5988	
CA Dollar	0.7417	1.1766	0.4412	1.0183	1.16	1.0000	1.1224	3.3728	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0281	0.3855	0.0890	1327.67	0.8735	11.54	3.4678	
NL Guilder	0.9614	89.06	0.3339	77.10	85.27	0.7586	866.86	3.0639	
FR Franc	0.1888	0.2964	0.1111	25.6537	21.71	0.2518	33.27	33.2700	

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	25.05	25.30
WTI	26.10	26.25
Bony	25.05	25.30
Dubai	22.40	22.79
UL Gas	211.00	213.00

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY				
SA Riyal	0.2687	0.4233	0.15876	0.36653	31.0395				
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.43226	0.16211	0.37425	31.8237				
KW Dinar	3.3311	5.2821	1.98334	4.58775	387.747				
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.21053	1.57828	3.64564	308.732				
CY Pound	2.0948	3.3244	1.2465	2.8772	243.73				

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	358.7	359.2
Silver (oz's)	4.75	4.77
Platinum (oz's)	363.8	364.8
AL (3 Months)	1602	1605
CU (3 Months)	2253	2258
Zinc (3 Months)	1095	1098
Lead (3 Months)	694	698
NI (3 Months)	7190	7220

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Cncy	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	Year				
USD	5.34	5.43	5.53	5.62	5.75				
GBP	6.17	6.39	6.55	6.75	6.95				
JPY	0.31	0.33	0.34	0.35	0.35				
DEM	3.00	3.03	3.04	3.05	3.08				
FRF	3.20	3.19	3.19	3.22	3.25				
CHF	1.82	1.88	1.75	1.82	1.85				
ITL	7.55	7.15	6.83	6.55	6.43				

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Ch		
New York	DOW JONES	6703.67	78	1.18	6708.03	6557.94	6825.87		
New York	S&P 500	759.55	-4.85	-0.62	759.55	748.92	754.44		
London	FT-SE 100	4056.6	-30.4	-0.74	4096.4	4038.9	4087		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	17302.65	-770.22	-4.26	18057.7	17123.9	18075.5		
Paris	CAC 40	2327.5	-21.58	-0.92	2347.68	2308.58	2348.08		
Frankfurt	DAX	2833.39	-40.76	-1.41	2874.34	2822.46	2872.63		

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lb)	123.67	Spot
Cocoa (5/ton)	1348	Spot
Sugar (5/ton)	308.3	Spot
Wheat (5/ton)	132	Spot
Soy (5/ton)	23.08	Spot
Ten (5/ton)	119	Spot
Barley (5/ton)	209	Spot
Rice (5/ton)	470	Spot

JOD Cross Rates			
Currency	Bid	Sell	
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	
GB Sterling	3.1183	3.1242	
DE Mark	0.4456	0.4478	
CHF Franc	0.9147	0.9173	
FR Franc	0.1321	0.1328	
JP Yen	0.0077	0.0078	
NL Guilder	0.937	0.939	
IT Lira	0.4483	0.4486	

\* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

## Oman rules out borrowing in '97

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Gulf state of Oman will not resort to fresh foreign borrowing in 1997 after it received a \$400 million loan in 1996, its minister of state for development has said.

Mohammad Ben Musa Al Yusuf said Muscat remained committed to its policy of not surpassing a loan ceiling of 1.5 billion Omani riyals (\$3.9 billion) during its latest five-year development plan, which ends in the year 2000.

"We can exceed that ceiling only by a decree from the sultan. But I don't think there are any justifications to exceed the ceiling," Mr. Yusuf told the United Arab Emirates economic weekly

Emirates Today.

"The Omani finance ministry had wanted a loan of \$300 million last year but it raised it to \$400 million after a rush by international banks to provide the loan. Of course, there is no need for another loan in 1997," he said.

Oman sought the loan from regional and international commercial banks although oil prices surged by around \$3 in 1996, boosting its revenues by nearly \$1 billion. But Omani officials said last week a large part of the extra income was transferred to the state reserve fund.

Mr. Yusuf said the oil price increase largely

improved Oman's economy in 1996, with the growth in the gross domestic product standing at between 7.5 per cent and eight per cent and the surplus in the trade balance rising by around 3.4 per cent. This was because of an increase of 9.9 per cent in total exports.

"1996 was better than the previous year. In fact, we have several other good economic indications," he said.

The minister said Oman would press ahead with privatisation of electricity and other public enterprises as part of overall reforms aimed at diversifying the economy and cushioning the impact of volatile crude prices.

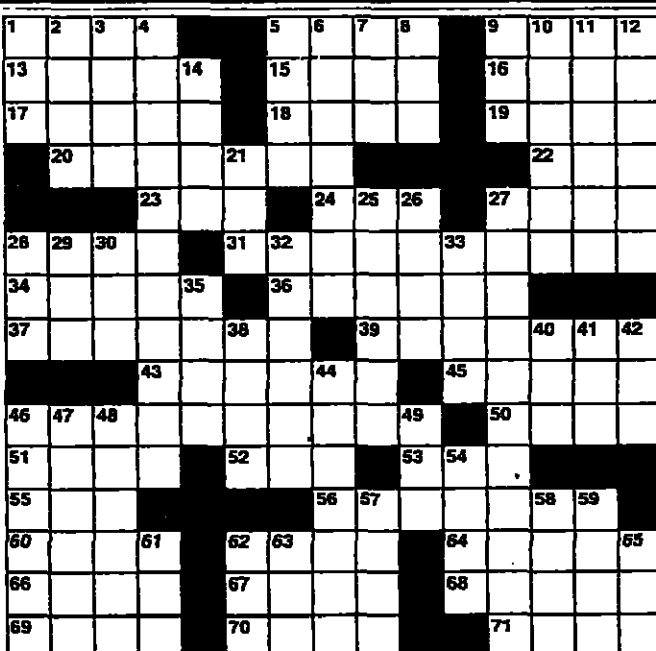
## THE Daily Crossword

### ACROSS

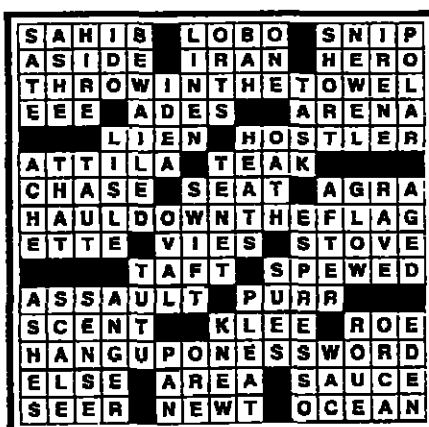
- 1 Space
- 5 Predatory bird
- 9 Baseball team
- 13 Seraph
- 15 Muslim priest
- 16 To — (precisely)
- 17 — firma
- 18 Intelligence
- 19 Brewing item
- 20 New soldier
- 22 Success
- 23 Showoff
- 24 An equine
- 27 Confused state of mind
- 28 Region
- 31 Entertaining one
- 34 Chessmen
- 36 Troublesome cars
- 37 Mailer's "The Naked and —"
- 39 Cloaks
- 43 Block
- 45 Military action
- 46 Owners
- 50 Diving bird
- 51 Govern
- 52 Catchall abbr.
- 53 Kimono sash
- 55 Japanese statesman
- 56 Lhasa native
- 60 Ninnies
- 62 Sea of —
- 64 Shore of TV, once
- 66 S-shaped molding
- 67 Accumulated traditions
- 68 Meaning
- 69 Fit together in a stack
- 70 Honcho
- 71 Conno

### DOWN

- 1 Bandicoot
- 2 Nonpareil
- 3 Monster
- 4 Things bought and sold
- 5 N.Z. bird
- 6 Copy
- 7 Tit for —



by James Barrick



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- 8 River to the North Sea
- 9 Rotating piece
- 10 Provo native
- 11 Belmopan's land
- 12 Dog
- 14 Pasternak character
- 21 Ref's cousin
- 25 Bolt genity
- 26 Greek promenade
- 27 Acts of war
- 28 Likely
- 29 Go, team!
- 30 Sheep
- 32 Like the first-born
- 33 Hotels
- 35 Powdered, in heraldry
- 38 Church section
- 40 Durocher
- 41 Kind of ideal
- 42 Upperclassman: abbr.
- 44 Falsifies, in a way
- 46 Jail
- 47 Temporary suspension of electric power
- 48 Skiing places
- 49 Weep
- 54 Pallets
- 57 Musical Burt
- 58 — Hathaway
- 59 Govt. org.
- 61 Coterie
- 62 Priest's robe
- 63 Place of disorder
- 65 Biddy

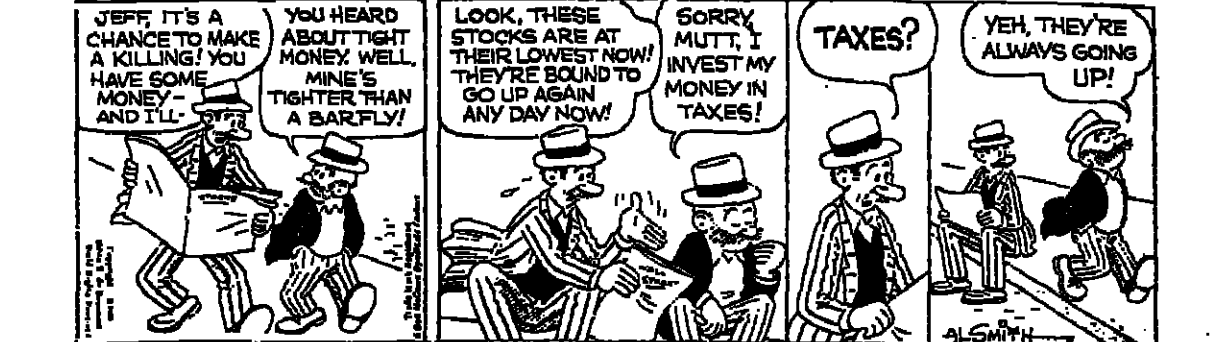
## Peanuts



## Andy Capp



## Mutt'n'Jeff



## HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) You get fine ideas today for the days ahead, however, study them from a practical view. Forget any tips for the time being or you will discover that the time you spend on them will be non-productive and could be costly.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) Try to get rid of your debts today so that you start the days ahead with a clean slate and thereby become quite successful. Don't disagree later this evening with your mate or there could be quite a difficult situation.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Before you judge anyone in the business world today, be sure of all the circumstance involved and thereby avoid any disagreements which could be present. Later this evening you can go out on the town for fun with your loved ones.

**MOON CHILDREN:** (June 22 to July 21) You may feel embittered if career activities don't go right, however, keep calm and everything will turn out for the better. Get to the cause of this frustration and develop a course of action. Rest up tonight for the days ahead.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) You have big expenses at this time because entertaining close friends, seeking out less costly pleasures and thereby have some funds for the lean times. Later this evening you can meet with fellow associates for business discussions.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) You have to be very patient at home today, otherwise much difficulty can ensue for some time to come. Later this evening will be a good time to seek out the advice of knowledgeable persons for a course of action to be successful.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Study any letters carefully today before you try to answer them, otherwise you could jump to an incorrect conclusion. You are not at your best at this time, however, with a little patience things will become better.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) You may find it difficult to handle financial matter today, however, a good friend can help you organize these things. Later this evening will be a good opportunity to meet with close friends for some recreational activities.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) Be sure you use your best judgement today if you are to work out all those angles successfully and make your life more content. Later tonight will be a good time to go out on the town with your mate and have a romantic time.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) A private concern could upset you so much today that you make crucial mistakes, however, if you keep a cool head and remain calm you will notice everything much better. This evening you can get together with close friends.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) This is not a good day today to try to see friends since they are very busy at this time, however, if you wait until another time, you will notice much improvement. You can await for the days ahead to notice any difference.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) Avoid the outside world as much as you can today, since others are apt not to be so helpful to at this time. Later this evening you will notice some improvement, so you should be patient for any positive results.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

## Japan's Yaskawa Eshed in joint

Yaskawa Electric Corp. of Japan and Israel's Eshed Robotics Ltd. have announced they would form a joint venture for the development of motion control products. The two companies will each invest \$2.5 million in the venture, which will be known as Yaskawa Eshed Technology Co. Ltd. YET will develop and manufacture robot controllers, drivers and other motion control products that will be sold by Yaskawa. Yaskawa is committed to purchasing more than \$5 million in YET

equipment. The joint venture is a result of a meeting between the two companies in Israel.

## Jordan seen still able to control the balance of the balance

DISPITE THE success of programme in narrowing the deficit as a percentage of the gross domestic product, the balance of payments, the former governor of the Central Bank, the deficit in the trade balance has not improved. The deficit in the trade balance in 1995 was 19.2 per cent in 1995, down from 21.2 per cent in 1994. He said that the deficit in the trade balance was a noticeable surplus. However, since Jordanian imports have increased, the deficit in the trade balance has increased. The deficit in the trade balance in 1995 was 19.2 per cent in 1995, down from 21.2 per cent in 1994. He said that the deficit in the trade balance was a noticeable surplus.

Dr. Nabulsi spoke of the central bank's programme with a balance of payments. He mentioned measures were taken to limit exports whereas, on the other hand, to liberalise



## Japan's Yaskawa, Israel's Eshed in joint venture

**TEL AVIV (R)** — Yaskawa Electric Corp of Japan and Israel's Eshed Robotec Ltd have announced they would form a company in Israel for the development of motion control products.

The two companies will each invest \$925,000 in the joint venture, to be known as Yaskawa Eshed Technology (YET). YET will develop and manufacture robot controllers, drivers and other motion control products that will be sold by Yaskawa.

Yaskawa is committed to purchasing more than \$25 million in YET products and services from 1997 to 2000.

Yaskawa and Eshed Robotec have been cooperating in the development of industrial robotics over the past few years.

Yaskawa is a world leader in robotic and electrical motion control with annual sales of about \$2 billion.

Eshed Robotec makes computerised integrated manufacturing systems and robotics as well as automation equipment for the educational market.

## Gulf Air fails to raise capital, seeks loan

**DOHA (AFP)** — Gulf Air's board of directors has failed to reach agreement on a plan to rescue the loss-making carrier from bankruptcy but said it was considering seeking a loan from the airline's government owners.

After an eight-hour meeting in the Qatari capital, the board said it decided to seek an "optional" loan from the owners to boost its financial position while carrying out studies on further capital requirements.

Qatari Communication Minister Ahmad Ibn Naser

Al Thani described the meeting as good, and the participants agreed on some proposals.

"The meeting ended with an agreement by all the parties to help Gulf Air overcome its present crisis," he told reporters after the meeting.

He did not elaborate on the proposals or the loan, which the Manama-based company could seek to offset its losses, caused mainly by growing competition from regional and other airlines.

It was the second meeting

in two days and had been called to reach agreement on raising the company's capital as one way of tackling the problem.

The shareholders — Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman — have considered raising the capital by around \$256 million.

But both Qatar and Oman have opposed the move and said the carrier must find "alternative sources" to raise additional resources and cut "its wasteful expenditure."

"I believe such an increase will not tackle the problem

which is threatening the company with bankruptcy. The situation could remain as it is," Sheikh Ahmad of Qatar said last month.

Bahrain and Abu Dhabi have also offered to buy out the stake of Qatar and Oman and pump in extra capital to rescue the airline.

Another source said Qatar and Oman viewed the move as a virtual "takeover bid."

According to Gulf Air chief executive Sheikh Ahmad Ibn Saif Al Nahayan of Abu Dhabi, Gulf Air has managed to eliminate

around 60 per cent of the company's budget deficit of \$150 million in 1996.

"The budget of the next fiscal year is promising," he told the Qatari News Agency without specifying how the deficit was slashed.

At a meeting in Muscat in November, Gulf Air suggested raising the capital and sacking employees after accumulating the losses.

Sheikh Ahmad said the agreement would help save Gulf Air, which has been locked in plans to upgrade its services and fleet.

"Such an agreement will ensure the continuation of Gulf Air and enable its employees to continue their work," he said.

He said the participants had agreed to hold more meetings to work for "improving the financial position of the company in a sound way."

"All owner countries have agreed on the solutions concerning increasing the company's capital," he said without elaborating.

## Arab Gulf banks boost foreign assets in '96

**ABU DHABI (AFP)** — The overseas assets of Arab Gulf banks increased by more than \$2 billion in 1996 and the bulk of the increase came from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), according to a Gulf bank.

The foreign assets of the commercial banks in the six-nation Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC) stood at \$33.3 billion at the end of June compared with around \$31 billion at the end of June 1995, the Bahraini-based Arab Bank Corporation (ABC) said in its monthly bulletin.

Most of the increase came from the UAE, whose 47 banks boost-

ed foreign assets to around \$10 billion from \$7.9 billion.

The foreign assets of Saudi banks dropped slightly to \$15.44 billion from \$15.54 billion while those by Kuwaiti banks rose to \$3.6 billion from \$3.3 billion, said the bulletin.

Bahraini and Omani

banks slightly cut their foreign assets while there was an increase of around \$200 million by Qatari banks.

The report showed oil production by the GCC slightly increased in the first nine months of 1996 over the same period of 1995.

Output grew to around 13.9 million barrels per

day (bpd) from 13.78 million bpd. Most of the increase came from Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, the report showed.

Production by Kuwait increased by around 40,000 bpd while it rose by 47,000 bpd in Qatar and 20,000 bpd in Oman. The UAE boosted production by

around 8,000 bpd while Bahrain's output remained unchanged.

The report showed Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil producer and exporter, remained committed to its OPEC-assigned quota of eight million bpd although it has nearly two million bpd in surplus capacity.

### Daily Beat

*A review of news from the Arabic press*

**Jordan seen still far from being able to control the current account of the balance of payments**

**\*\* DESPITE THE** success of the structural adjustment programme in narrowing the deficit in the trade balance as a percentage of the gross domestic product, Jordan is still far from being able to control the current account of the balance of payments, Mohammad Said Nabulsi, the former governor of the Central Bank of Jordan, said in a lecture.

He noted that the deficit as a percentage of the gross domestic product has dropped from 61 per cent in 1992 to 29.2 per cent in 1995 and the deficit in the current account from 21.2 per cent to 8.9 per cent. Furthermore, he said that the deficit in the capital account was turned into a noticeable surplus.

However, since Jordanian exports cannot cover but 40 per cent of the Kingdom's imports, there is a large and chronic deficit in the trade balance, Dr. Nabulsi pointed out. He said that imports have even increased in 1996 and, as such, the deficit in the trade balance has swelled above the 1995 level. The former governor highlighted the remittances of expatriates as being a main element to redress the deficit in the current account but he also cautioned that the remittances were subject to political considerations and cannot be influenced except through monetary stability.

Dr. Nabulsi spoke of the contradictions in the structural adjustment programme with regard to the deficit in the balance of payments. He mentioned that on one hand measures were taken to limit imports and encourage exports whereas, on the other hand, measures were taken to liberalise external trade and sharply reduce customs tariffs which have all contributed to raise the import potential of the country. "The adjustment programme tried to remedy this contradiction by covering the gap through external financing and grants," Dr. Nabulsi indicated.

"The final result for the balance of payments now does not give the conviction that the accomplishment in fixing this imbalance equals the accomplishment in fixing the financial and monetary imbalances," he indicated. As such, he stressed: "There is pressing need to continue to give the highest priority to fixing the structural imbalance in the balance of payments."

He concluded that he sees no alternative to supporting the Kingdom's tangible and intangible exports by all means and to encouraging local and foreign investment to maximise Jordanian exports (Al Ra'i)

## Egyptian state moves in on Alexandria refinery

**CAIRO (R)** — The Egyptian public sector has quadrupled its capital in a \$2 billion joint-venture to build an oil refinery with Israelis in a structural change which also doubles the capital of the company, executives have said.

The change gives the state's Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) effective control of the project, Middle East Oil Refinery (MIDOR), which was initially dominated by the Merhaf Group of Israel and Swiss-based Maska Swiss, led by Egyptian businessman Hussein Salem.

Mr. Salem, who remains chairman of MIDOR, told Reuters that EGPC now has 40 per cent of the capital, which has risen to \$360 million from \$180 million.

The Egyptian companies Petrojet and ENPPI (Engineering Petroleum and Process Industries) have taken 10 per cent each, he added. The companies nominally have private sector status but EGPC is the biggest shareholder in both.

Merhaf and Maska Swiss did not contribute to the

capital increase so their stakes have halved to 20 per cent each. They originally had 40 per cent each, with 20 per cent for EGPC.

When it began, the project attracted much attention because of the Israeli stake and because it was then the biggest private-sector investment in downstream oil activities in Egypt, where all other refineries are state-owned.

To reflect the change in shareholdings, the Egyptian state has appointed Sameh Fahmy as president, vice-chairman and managing director of MIDOR. Mr. Fahmy was previously EGPC vice-chairman for projects.

Mr. Salem said the structural change took place last month with the full approval of all the parties. "The aim is to upgrade the refinery," he added, without elaboration.

Mr. Salem said MIDOR would not need to borrow much to set up the refinery in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria but he declined to go into the company's financing plans.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET														
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - GROUND FLOOR														
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179														
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 12/01/1997														
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE				
261.000	205.000	ARAB BANK	14.1	1.36	1	250	5140	258.50	267.00	1.50				
3.660	2.900	BANK OF JORDAN	11.7	0.00	2	150	488	3.42	3.25	-0.17				
1.230	0.880	MID. EAST INV. BK.	72.3	0.00	1	500	550	2.12	1.10	-0.10				
2.700	2.120	INDUSTRIAL BANK S.K.	8.3	0.00	1	250	550	2.28	2.26	-0.02				
2.950	2.440	JOR. KIWAT BANK	19.0	0.00	2	55	544	2.62	2.62	0.00				
4.180	3.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.7	0.00	2	250	518	3.68	3.68	0.00				
1.450	1.000	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	12	997	1233	1.30	1.28	-0.02				
<b>BANK SECTOR TOTALS</b>										INDEX: 195.92	CHNG: -0.60	22	12122	20706
1.830	1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PUB.	11.3	7.36	9	4950	8069	1.63	1.63	0.00				
5.650	4.200	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	7.9	2.85	2	120	542	4.75	4.51	-0.24				
2.800	2.090	SHIPPING LINES	10.3	8.16	2	750	1830	2.28	2.18	-0.10				
1.740	1.080	HATL. PORTFOLIO	8.9	0.00	5	1150	1359	1.20	1.18	-0.02				
0.800	0.400	HACH. EXP. REPT. NAIN.	9	0.00	1	250	113	0.47	0.45	-0.02				
1.250	0.960	ZAKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	4	1300	1365	1.03	1.03	0.00				
2.250	1.850	DRIFTED CO.	11.1	4.76	28	1800	3836	2.12	2.12	0.00				
1.200	0.820	UNION LAND DEV.	8	0.00	1	250	220	0.84	0.88	0.04				
<b>SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS</b>										INDEX: 111.59	CHNG: -1.71	52	27070	51841
3.730	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.9	3.03	14	4410	14548	3.30	3.30	0.00				
3.500	2.710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	25.2	0.00	3	200	655	3.20	3.27	0.07				
6.000	4.930	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.1	3.13	5	1500	8752	5.80	5.66	-0.14				
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.8	8.23	16	1831	18010	9.74	9.72	-0.02				
7.300	6.400	JORDAN TANNING	6.7	5.76	2	80	563	6.40	6.25	-0.15				
2.590	1.250	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	5.3	0.00	1	300	361	1.25	1.20	-0.05				
3.710	1.650	TECHNICAL COMM. AG.	32.5	0.00	1	250	605	2.47	2.42	-0.05				
4.730	3.400	ARAB PEARM. MFG.	19.2	5.73	3	300	1046	3.51	3.50	-0.01				
6.450	5.650	JOR. CERAMIC INC.	7.6	4.10	1	100	610	6.05	6.10	0.05				
3.250	1.570	JOR. TYPES. MACH.	8.9	7.10	2	300	680	1.50	1.40	-0.10				
3.630	3.100	JOR. PAPER CARBON.	17.1	3.00	2	200	697	3.24	3.33	0.09				
7.450	4.250	JAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	23.3	4.12	2	250	1213	4.90	4.85	-0.05				
5.800	3.130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.7	0.00	1	250	875	3.35	3.30	-0.05				
960	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	21	29650	18089	0.61	0.61	0.00				
1.440	1.060	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	7.8	9.01	1	200	230	1.16	1.15	-0.01				
1.020	0.540	NATIONAL INDS.	10.1	8.82	8	2808	1406	0.68	0.68	0.00				
<b>INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS</b>										INDEX: 113.35	CHNG: +0.21	131	56087	86089
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>										INDEX: 152.35	CHNG: -0.35	205	94369	158635
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 12/01/1997														
740	440	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	20.1	0.00	3	1000	500	0.33	0.30	-0.03				
800	500	JOR. TRADE FAC.	13.9	0.00	4	2150	1410	0.51	0.52	0.01				
980	700	UNION INV. SOF.	58.9	0.00	4	9000	1980	0.73	0.72	-0.01				
990	670	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	39	65200	29053	0.45	0.45	0.00				
950	670	AL-DAMLIYAH TS	15.4	0.00	7	3794	1651	0.45	0.45	0.00				
640	400	JOR. ZAKA. MACH. TENGCO	6.0	0.00	1	250	85	0.35	0.34	-0.01				
800	510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	8	0.00	6	4150	2610	0.62	0.62	0.00				
1.730	1.300	HATL. CHLORINE	8	0.00	3	1100	1507	1.41	1.37	-0.04				
690	490	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	3	2210	875	0.74	0.74	0.00				
900	620	HATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	4	1300	728	0.56	0.56	0.00				
970	400	HATL. MULT. ENG. NAMICO	8	0.00	28	32946	16239	0.50	0.50	0.00				
990	720	UNION TORBACO 75%	8	0.00	7	4223	3126	0.74	0.74	0.00				
1.330	1.020	ARAB STEEL	8	0.00	2	700	553	1.05	1.04	-0.01				
770	570	RAIL FARM. 65%	8	0.00	1	3450	828	0.60	0.59	-0.01				
770	390	INDS. GERMANIC	25.9	0.00	16	10650	12873	0.41	0.42	0.01				
1.360	760	INDS. GERMANIC	8	0.00	3	8450	7466	0.80	0.79	-0.01				
1.850	680	PEARL SH. P. CONV.	8	0.00	1	1400	952	0.69	0.68	-0.01				
840	590	HATL. POULTRY	8	0.00	2	3000	2100	0.69	0.70	0.01				
1.100	530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	8.1	0.00	23	21750	14997	0.69	0.69	0.00				
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>										INDEX: 157	CHNG: +0.21	131	198363	99778

### THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

"Your little hearts don't float as high as they used to. What's wrong?"

### JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles. One letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

**BANIC**  
O B I E N M A S S I V E S I N C A L I P H A T E M O R T A L I T Y

**TALGO**  
O B I E N M A S S I V E S I N C A L I P H A T E M O R T A L I T Y

**MEHRIT**  
O B I E N M A S S I V E S I N C A L I P H A T E M O R T A L I T Y



# Australian Open starts today

## Swiss starlet could oust Graf

MELBOURNE (R) — The big guns of world tennis meet in the Australian Open on Monday to shoot it out at the season's first Grand Slam and hapless Slovak Janette Husarova is likely to be their first victim.

Husarova, ranked a lowly 79th in the world, will be on the opposite side of the centre court net as world number one and top seed Steffi Graf starts her campaign on Monday for a fifth Australian Open title.

In the absence of 1996 champion Monica Seles, who is nursing a broken finger, Graf appears a class above her challengers. And Husarova, a 22-year-old from Bratislava who has never progressed beyond the first round at a Grand Slam, is unlikely to provide her with more than a gentle warm-up match.

The most likely threat to Graf's dominance over the next two weeks could come from the sport's youngest prize money millionaire, Martina Hingis of Switzerland.

Winning her third WTA Tour title in Sydney on Saturday boosted not just her ranking but her confidence as she starts her third Australian Open. Ranked and seeded number four, she will start in the opposite side of the draw to Graf, setting up an intriguing showdown in the final.

Victory at the age of 16 years and four months would make her the youngest Grand Slam champion in the professional era.

The men's draw is more evenly balanced, reflecting the greater strength in depth on the ATP Tour.

World number one Pete Sampras will have to get past U.S. compatriot Jim Courier, Croatia's Goran



Steffi Graf

Ivanisevic and Austria's Thomas Muster on his way to the final and a possible meeting with defending champion Boris Becker.

Becker, seeded sixth for his third title, is facing

American Michael Chang, the world number two and second seed, and fellow-German Michael Stich — both Grand Slam winners — on the other side of the draw.

Becker, a notorious slow

starter in major tournaments, faces a stern test in his first round match on centre court on Monday against young Spanish baseliner Carlos Moya, who beat him in last year's Paris Open in

their only previous meeting. Sampras should have an easier time of it after being paired with unknown qualifier Dinu Pescariu of Romania, whose official profile reveals he earned a paltry \$64,233 in prize money last year against his opponent's four million dollars.

Chang, who has gradually risen to the highest ranking of his career, is determined to be remembered for more than just his victory in the French Open as a 17-year-old in 1989, his only Grand Slam success to date.

He will start his campaign in Melbourne on Monday against Belgian qualifier Kris Goossens of Belgium on court two.

But there was disappointment for local fans when unseeded but big-serving Australian Mark Philippoussis withdrew on Sunday with tendinitis in the right forearm.

Briton Tim Henman, a non-seed but regarded as a dangerous floater after his victory in the Sydney International on Saturday, will play a lucky loser from the qualifying tournament after Philippoussis's withdrawal.

Australian bookmakers had Graf as 2-1 favourite to win the women's championship, with Hingis at 9-2, Sanchez Vicario at 8-1 and Capriati at 14-1.

In the men's draw, Sampras will start as 6-4 favourite, ahead of Becker at 7-2, Chang at 5-1, Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic at 10-1 and Austria's Thomas Muster at 14-1. Unseeded Henman and former double champion Jim Courier were quoted at 16-1.

## Roll of champions at Australian Open

Following are the men's and women's singles champions at the Australian Open tennis tournament for the past 10 years:

### Men's champions:

1987 Stefan Edberg (Sweden)  
1988 Mats Wilander (Sweden)  
1989 Ivan Lendl (U.S.)  
1990 Lendl  
1991 Boris Becker (Germany)  
1992 Jim Courier (U.S.)  
1993 Courier  
1994 Pete Sampras (U.S.)  
1995 Andre Agassi (U.S.)  
1996 Becker

### Women's champions

1987 Hana Mandlikova (Czech)  
1988 Steffi Graf (Germany)  
1989 Graf  
1990 Graf  
1991 Monica Seles (Yugoslavia)  
1992 Seles  
1993 Seles  
1994 Graf  
1995 Mary Pierce (France)  
1996 Seles (U.S.)

## Australian Open factfile

•Venue: The National Tennis Centre, Melbourne Park  
•Surface: rebound ace hardcourt  
•Total prizemoney: US\$7.6 million (men's champion receives \$468,000 women's champion receives \$433,600)  
•Current men's champion: Boris Becker (Germany)  
•Current women's champion: Monica Seles (U.S.)  
•Current men's doubles champions: Stefan Edberg (Sweden) and Petr Korda (Czech Republic)  
•Current women's doubles champions: Chanda Rubin (U.S.) and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario (Spain)  
•Youngest men's champion: Ken Rosewall

(Australia) 18 years and two months in 1953  
•Youngest women's champion: Seles, 17 years and one month in 1991  
•Oldest men's champion: Rosewall, 37 years and two months in 1972  
•Oldest women's champion: Thelma Long (Australia), 35 years and eight months in 1954  
•Most successive men's singles titles: Roy Emerson (Australia) five, 1963-67  
•Most successive women's singles titles: Margaret Smith Court (Australia) seven, 1960-66  
•Only unseeded champions: Mark Edmondson (Australia) 1976, Chris O'Neal (Australia) 1978.



Yevgeny Kafelnikov

## Philippoussis joins Open injury list

MELBOURNE (R) — Big-serving Australian Mark Philippoussis withdrew from the Australian Open on Sunday with an arm injury, adding his name to a long casualty list at the year's first Grand Slam tournament.

Philippoussis, who stunned

World No. 1 Pete Sampras in a third-round upset in Melbourne last year, was sidelined by tendinitis in his right forearm.

He said doctors had advised him to take a complete rest from tennis for several weeks.

His exit gave a boost to Briton Tim Henman as they were scheduled to meet in a first-round match on centre court at the National Tennis Centre on Monday evening.

"I am bitterly disappointed," Philippoussis, ranked 29, told reporters. "This is not the best start of the year for me."

"I have to look to the future as I'm only 20 years old and I have to take care of myself," said Philippoussis, who rated himself a doubtful starter for Australia's Davis Cup tie against France in Sydney in early February.

Fourth seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia heads

the list of big-name absentees in the Open men's draw because of injury after breaking a bone in his hand while training on Thursday.

Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands and American Todd Martin have also been forced out.

Philippoussis dropped out of last week's Sydney International tournament to rest the injury in the hope of being fit to play in the Open.

"The arm felt as if it was coming along well until yesterday when there was a bit of pain."

Australian Pat Cash's match against Argentina's Javier Frana was switched to centre court. Unseeded Henman, who won his first tour title at the Sydney International on Saturday, will play a "lucky loser" from the qualifying competition on Tuesday.

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In order for the ABC to provide better services to Jordanian importers in general, and representatives of American products in particular, it is necessary that we obtain this information.

All responses should be hand delivered to the ABC between 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon, Sunday through Thursday.

Again, thank you for your cooperation.

## Wiberg wins Super G at Bad Kleinkirchheim

BAD KLEINKIRCHHEIM, Austria (AP) — Sweden's Pernilla Wiberg — the dominating woman skier this season — won a Super G race Sunday, further bolstering her World Cup lead.

After a near-perfect run on a hard-packed track, Wiberg won in 1:39.98.

It was Wiberg's 17th career victory and fourth this season after two Super

G and two slalom wins. Isolde Kostner of Italy finished in second with a time of 1:40.26, ahead of five German skiers.

"I trained very well last summer and autumn and did fitness training between Christmas and new year," Wiberg said. "That's necessary because the season is very long."

Wiberg was mobbed by reporters in the finish area

amid a festival atmosphere in bright sunshine. Her victory gave her some 250,000 schillings (\$22,700) in prize money.

She was the slalom world champion last February in Sierra Nevada, Spain, the 1991 world champion in the giant slalom, and the 1992 Olympic champion in the same discipline.

Katja Seizinger of Germany finished third with a time of 1:40.26. She won all Super-G season titles in the last four years.

## GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAN HIRSCH

### CHECHEZ LA FEMME

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH: ♠ A 10 7 5

♥ 9 8

♦ Q J

♣ Q 10 8 6

WEST: ♠ 6 4

♥ 10 8 7 5 2

♦ A 10 7 5

♣ 4 3

EAST: ♠ K 3

♥ K 3 3

♦ 9 8 5 4

♣ 9 5 2

SOUTH: ♠ Q 10 8 3

♥ 7 6 4

♦ K 2

♣ A K 7

The bidding:

NORTH: Pass

EAST: Pass

SOUTH: Pass

WEST: Pass

3♠: Pass

4NT: Pass

6♠: Pass

Opening lead: Five of ♣

The defenders work at a disadvantage. Each can see only half of declarer's ♠ assets and half of declarer's ♣. It is a sound principle, when defending, that if there are two possibilities to defend the contract, play for the one that needs the weakest holding from partner.

Souder yet is to do whatever possible to find out what partner holds!

South was overly aggressive to proceed directly to six spades. Since North could not open the bidding and use ace was known to be missing, it was wildly optimistic to expect that North could cover all the other losers in South's hand.

West led a low heart and East's king was captured by the ace. The queen of trumps lost to the king, and East had to decide whether to play partner for the queen of hearts or ace of diamonds. On the minimalist theory set out above, East reversed to hearts and declarer rolled home, drawing trumps and then discarding two diamonds on the table's clubs.

East's troubles arose at the very first trick. Since it was impossible, on this auction, that West was under-riding the ace of hearts against a slam, it was obvious that the location of the queen was likely to be critical. East can discover who has the lady by playing the jack from hand, losing to the queen!

When in with the king of trumps, East must hope that partner holds either the ace of diamonds or the king of clubs. The latter is unlikely to go away, but declarer's diamond losers might be pitched on dummy's clubs. The diamond switch then becomes both critical and obvious.



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A Rob Cohen film

Sylvester Stallone ..... in

DAYLIGHT

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PHILADELPHIA "2"

Richard Gere, Sean Connery

& Julia Ormond.....in

FIRST KNIGHT

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699236

PLAZA

\* RANSOM

Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "1"

Sylvester Stallone & Curt Russell...in

TANGO & CASH

Shows: 12, 2, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CONCORD "2"

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## Hawks win in overtime; Bulls beat Rockets

ATLANTA (R) — Steve Smith scored six of his 15 points in the final 98 seconds as the Atlanta Hawks beat the San Antonio Spurs 87-82 Saturday and tied an NBA record by playing their third consecutive overtime game.

Christian Laettner had 26 points and 10 rebounds for Atlanta, which has won five in a row, including overtime wins over Phoenix Tuesday and Orlando Thursday.

"At least we're winning," Laettner said. "I'll play 82 overtimes in a row if we're going to win them."

Atlanta forced overtime when Mookie Blaylock launched a shot from the deep right side that banked in for a three-pointer, tying the game 77-77 with 3.8 seconds left.

The Hawks held San Antonio to one field goal over the final four-plus minutes for their 13th straight home win.

Avery Johnson scored 21 points and Will Perdue added 19 and 17 rebounds for the Spurs, losers of five in a row.

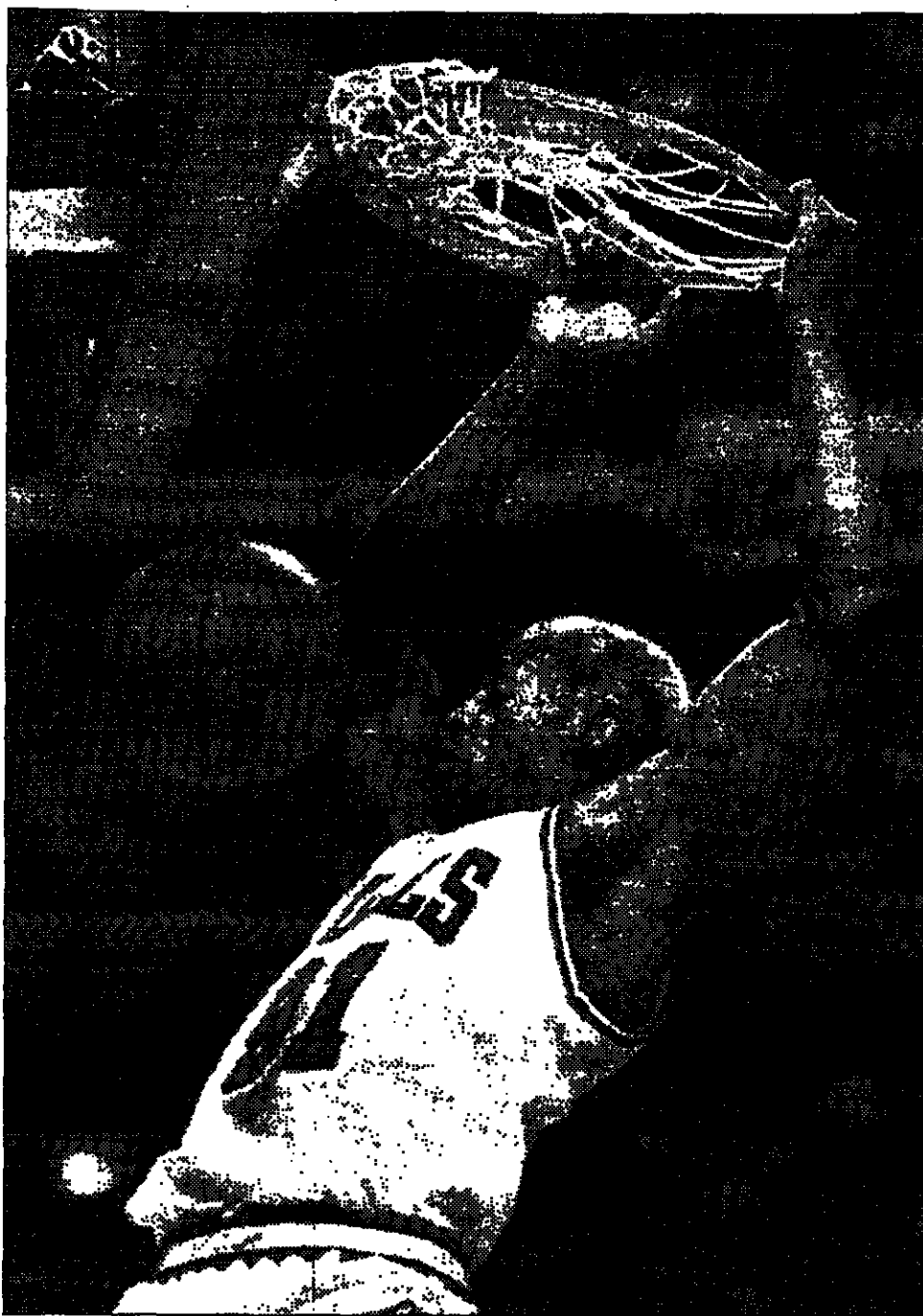
In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 32 points and Toni Kukoc added 20 as the Bulls pulled away for a 110-86 thumping of the Houston Rockets in a matchup of the top teams in each conference.

Scottie Pippen had 17 points and Dennis Rodman grabbed 18 rebounds as the Bulls beat the Rockets for the third straight time and won for the 17th time in 18 games to raise their record to a league-best 31-4.

Khalid El-Amrani scored 29 points to lead Houston. At Detroit, Grant Hill and Lindsey Hunter scored 19 points apiece as the Pistons handed the Utah Jazz their eighth straight road loss, 87-77.

Terry Mills added 18 for the Pistons, who limited Utah to a season-low 30 first-half points and held their 14th consecutive opponents under 100 points. Karl Malone scored 19 points and Jeff Hornacek had 16 for Utah, which had won its previous nine meetings with Detroit.

At New Jersey, Damon Stoudamire had 28 points and nine assists and Walt Williams added 16 of his 28 in a 48-point first quarter as the Toronto Raptors beat the



Dennis Rodman of the Chicago Bulls

Nets for the third time this season, 123-106.

The Raptors fell two points shy of the NBA record for a first quarter as they built a whopping 48-17 cushion.

Williams scored six points and Marcus Camby added five of his 19 as Toronto outscored New Jersey 19-5 in the final 3:43 of the quarter. The Raptors shot 83 percent (19-for-23) from the field in the first quarter.

In New York, Patrick Ewing scored 30 points and John Starks added 20 as the Knicks completed a home-and-home sweep of the Boston Celtics with a 112-99 victory.

Rookie John Wallace added 19 for New York, which extended its winning streak over the Celtics to 17 games. The Knicks also have won 12 straight home games and seven of its last eight overall.

Antoine Walker scored 23 points and Greg Minor added 15 for Boston, which fell to 1-14 on the road this season.

In Cleveland, Rod Strickland scored 20 points and Juwan Howard added 18 to lead the Washington Bullets to a 98-85 victory

over the slumping Cavaliers.

The Bullets posted their fourth straight win and came within one basket of becoming the first team to score 100 or more points twice this season against the Cavaliers.

Terrell Brandon scored 19 points and Tyrone Hill had 16 for the Cavs, who were held to 40 per cent shooting from the field in their third successive loss.

At Minnesota, Stephon Marbury scored eight of his 20 points in the final three minutes as the surging Timberwolves rallied for a 95-93 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Tom Gugliotta scored 28 points and Doug West added 15 for the Timberwolves, who have won eight of their last 10 games to climb within two games of .500 (17-19).

Darrick Martin scored 19 points and Lorenzen Wright added 15 and 15 rebounds for the Clippers, who squandered a 15-point second-quarter lead.

In Dallas, George McCloud scored seven of his 21 points in the final 63

seconds and Chris Gatling also had 21 to lead the Mavericks to a 104-99 win over the reeling Denver Nuggets.

Laphonso Ellis scored 28 points and Dale Ellis and Ricky Pierce added 18 each for the Nuggets, who have dropped seven of their last eight games.

McCloud made 6-of-9 shots and was 7-for-8 from the free throw line in 27 minutes off the bench, helping the Mavs to a 64-33 advantage in bench scoring.

In Seattle, Hersey Hawkins scored 19 points and Detlef Schrempf recorded 18 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds to lead the SuperSonics to a 92-82 win over the Indiana Pacers.

Seattle has won five in a row and eight of its last 10 games, keeping all opponents under 100 points in that span.

Rik Smits had 20 points and 13 rebounds.

In Vancouver, Mitch Richmond scored 32 points and ignited a decisive 9-0 fourth-quarter run as the Sacramento Kings beat the Grizzlies 109-101.

## U.K. awaits start of sensational soccer bribes trial

WINCHESTER (R) — Soccer stars Bruce Grobbelaar, John Fashanu and Hans Segers go on trial this week on charges of conspiring to fix English Premier League matches in the most sensational case of its kind for more than 30 years.

Zimbabwean-born Grobbelaar — who won six league titles with Liverpool — fellow goalkeeper Segers and retired striker Fashanu, as well as Malaysian businessman Heng Suan Lim, all deny the charges.

The four will appear in the dock on Tuesday in the southern town of Winchester accused of conspiring together to give and accept gifts of money as inducements to influence the outcome of soccer matches improperly or as rewards for having done so.

If convicted, they could face sentences of up to seven years in jail and unlimited fines.

The four, as well as Fashanu's wife Melissa Kassa-Mapsi, were charged after an investigation into alleged match-fixing and corruption. The case

generated huge media interest. Charges against Kassa-Mapsi were later withdrawn.

The case is the first of its kind since three players from Sheffield Wednesday — including two England internationals — were imprisoned for four months in 1964 and banned from soccer for life from fixing a match on which they had laid bets.

Grobbelaar, 39, moved to Southampton from Liverpool and now plays for second division Plymouth as well as acting as co-coach of the Zimbabwean international side.

Dutchman Segers, 35, plays on a non-contract basis for first division Wolverhampton Wanderers while Fashanu, 33, who made his name with Wimbledon, retired with a knee injury shortly after moving to Aston Villa in 1994.

Grobbelaar denies a charge of accepting 40,000 pounds (\$67,000) from Fashanu to influence the result of a Newcastle United versus Liverpool game in November 1993, when

Grobbelaar was playing for Liverpool. Newcastle won 3-0.

Television presenter and businessman Fashanu denies giving Grobbelaar the money as a reward for having improperly influenced or attempted to influence the outcome of the match.

He also denies giving Segers 19,000 pounds (\$32,000) as a reward after Wimbledon's 3-0 defeat at Liverpool in October 1994. Segers denied accepting the money.

Grobbelaar also denies a charge of accepting 2,000 pounds (\$3,300) from his former business partner, Chris Vincent, in November 1994 for throwing an unspecified match. Grobbelaar was transferred to Southampton before the 1994/95 season.

The police inquiry was prompted by media allegations about the activities of an Asian gambling syndicate in the Premier League. Games attract heavy betting on both the result and the precise score.

## New bids complicate Forest's future

LONDON (R) — The future of Nottingham Forest was thrown into fresh doubt on Saturday when a further two bids were put forward for the struggling English Premier League club.

Forest have already been the subject of two takeover bids this season, both of which were rejected by shareholders who had been expected to accept a third proposal from a consortium led by former Tottenham chairman Irving Scholar, author Phil Soar and Nigel Wray, the owner of London rugby union club Saracens.

But now the consortium has put forward an alternative offer which differs from the first in the balance between the amount of money it ploughs into the club and the amount it pays out to shareholders.

Either bid would require 75 per cent shareholder approval. "We've given the club and its shareholders a choice, both of which provide substantial benefits to secure the future of the club," Scholar said.

## Keegan's exit can't stop Newcastle's roller-coaster

LONDON (R) — Newcastle United showed just why Kevin Keegan's hair turned grey in four years before he quit as manager on Wednesday with a typical Jekyll and Hyde performance in a 2-2 draw with Aston Villa in the English Premier League on Saturday.

Newcastle raced into a 2-0 lead after only 21 minutes thanks to goals from Alan Shearer and Lee Clark — but then were lucky to escape with a point thanks to a penalty save by goalkeeper Shaka Hislop midway through the second half.

By the time of the penalty in the 61st minute Villa had fought back to equalise with goals from Dwight Yorke and Savo Milosevic.

Both Newcastle goals came courtesy of errors by Australian keeper Mark Bosnich. He allowed a shot from Shearer to creep under his body and then he engineered one of the freak goals of the season.

Preparing to drop-kick the ball away, he lost his footing and inadvertently kicked the ball a few metres straight to Clark who then did superbly to lob the ball into the empty net from 30 metres over the head of defender Steve Staunton.

Yorke's goal came from a tap-in after 39 minutes, while Milosevic also scored from close-range after Staunton had brought a superb save out of Hislop after 52 minutes.

Leaders Liverpool wasted a chance of opening up a gap at the top by being held 0-0 at home by a West Ham side with just one win in their last 11 matches, while second-placed Arsenal crashed 1-0 at Sunderland in the second game of their three-match series against each other.

After drawing 1-1 in the F.A. Cup last week and due to meet again in a replay next week, the match turned nasty after 29 minutes when Arsenal's Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp uncharacteristically went in over the top on Paul Bracewell and was sent off. While Bergkamp lost his temper, Arsenal skipper Tony Adams lost his sense of direction, putting through his own net after 66 minutes.

With third-placed Manchester United not playing Tottenham until Sunday, Wimbledon had a chance of moving above them in the standings but were held to a 1-1 draw at home by derby where a late goal by Dutchman Rob Willems cancelled out Marcus Gayle's 60th-minute effort for the Dons.

While none of the teams at the top won, only one of

## Keegan's exit can't stop Newcastle's roller-coaster

the bottom six lost.

The losers were Middlesbrough whose 1-0 home defeat to Southampton meant that Bryan Robson's team, assembled at a cost of more than 30 million pounds (\$50 million), fell to bottom.

They also had Clayton Blackmore sent off early in the second half.

Southampton's first away win of the season came courtesy of a controversial 59th-minute penalty from Jim Magilton which followed the handball offence that led to Blackmore's red card. Southampton, who had been bottom, are now 19th.

Nottingham Forest also continued their mini-revival under player-coach Stuart Pearce, beating Chelsea 2-0 with Pearce scoring the first with a trademark thunderbolt free-kick after 40 minutes. Chris Bart-Williams added the second.

Blackburn, who were bottom for most of September and October, continued their climb to safety with their biggest win of the season, a 4-0 victory over Coventry.

Ian Rush meanwhile, who had scored just once in 22 matches for Leeds, scored twice in 25 minutes during their 3-0 win over Leicester.

### factfile

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**Nursing Aid:** Nursing



## U.N. says Iraqis dug up new items at missile site

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraqis have dug up more items at a ballistic missile site near Baghdad in an effort to prove they have destroyed prohibited weapons, a U.N. official said on Sunday.

"Iraqis who are excavating at a missile site have dug up new items under the presence of our team," Roger Knight, assistant director of Baghdad's Ongoing Monitoring and Verification centre (OMV), told Reuters.

Mr. Knight declined to say what was found or the location of the excavations.

Iraqi bulldozers began digging at the site last Tuesday to recover what Iraq said were banned missile components destroyed and buried soon after the 1991 Gulf war that drove Baghdad's troops out of Kuwait.

"The whole process is an Iraqi initiative to prove they have destroyed all prohibited missiles," Mr. Knight said.

Under the Gulf war ceasefire, Iraq is not allowed to have weapons of mass destruction, including missiles with ranges beyond 150 kilometres.

The U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of scrapping the weapons suspects Iraq still has a significant number of the missiles. Baghdad denies concealing missiles.

Iraq and UNSCOM are locked in a dispute over missile engines Baghdad imported from the former Soviet Union and claims to have destroyed.

The commission wants to

take missile parts it dug up last year from another site out of Iraq for analysis to prove they are not substitutes for the original engines. Baghdad rejected the request and last month the U.N. Security Council censured Iraq over the issue.

Mr. Knight declined to say if Iraq had agreed to let the latest finds out of Iraq for testing.

Ten U.N. inspectors, under Michael Bordin of France, are supervising the digging and will stay in Iraq as long as excavations continue, Mr. Knight said.

U.N. inspectors must certify Iraq no longer holds banned weapons before the United Nations will lift a ban on Iraqi oil exports, other than limited sales to fund humanitarian relief that began last month.

### Death rates high

The Iraqi health ministry said Sunday that the death rates for Iraqis remain high, despite local and international efforts to bring them down, the official Iraqi news agency reported.

The ministry blamed the U.N. sanctions, that barred Iraq from exporting oil, its economic mainstay, leading to shortages of food, medicine and other necessities.

Iraq last month began exporting limited quantities of oil under a special, U.N.-supervised "oil-for-food" deal aimed at easing the situation.

The ministry said that 5,807 children under the age of five died in December 1996, compared with 299 cases in December

1989. It said that deaths for those over 50 totaled 2,326 last month, compared with 419 in December 1989.

It said malnutrition and diarrhea were the main causes of children's deaths, while diabetes and blood pressure problems were to blame for deaths in the older group.

There was no way to independently verify the figures, which some western experts say are exaggerated to try to pressure the United Nations to lift the sanctions.

### UAE aid arrives

A boat carrying 32 tonnes of food and medicine donated from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has arrived in an Iraqi port, officials said Sunday.

Iraqi officials threw a party for the UAE and Indian crew who sailed the wooden dhow to the Gulf port of Um Qasr "to express their solidarity with the Iraqi people suffering under the embargo," the official INA news agency said.

The shipment of 17 tonnes of powdered milk for Iraqi children and 15 tonnes of medicine is a gift from Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who is the crown prince of Dubai and UAE defence minister.

The UAE government, which has had no relations with Iraq since the 1991 Gulf war, sent many humanitarian shipments to the Iraqi people in the last few years. The UAE leadership has also made several appeals for Arab reconciliation with Iraq.



**KING IN GAZA:** His Majesty King Hussein is received upon his arrival in Gaza on Sunday by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and senior officials (see story on page 1)

## Deputies, government argue over JTV coverage of New Year

By Maria Bizri and Tarek Momani  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government and Jordan Television (JTV) came under attack from Islamist deputies on Sunday over JTV's transmission of New Year's celebrations around the world.

During a regular Lower House session, several deputies charged that the JTV's coverage was an affront to Islam, and ran contradictory to Islamic traditions and Jordanian ethics.

JTV had, on New Year's Eve, broadcast live footage from year-end celebrations in Jordan and around the world.

In response to the Islamists' accusations, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti said that the government believes that all Jordanian citizens have the right to enjoy certain forms

of entertainment, that the government is still committed to its values and traditions, adding that such values are set and supported by the government, not others.

Reacting to the prime minister's position, Deputy Ibrahim Zeid Keilani, an Islamic Action Front (IAF) member, contended that Mr. Kabariti's response promotes delinquency and is unconstitutional in that the state religion is Islam.

He added that the premier's statement "encourages vice" and is part of the normalisation policy towards Israel that "will ultimately destroy the spirit of the nation."

According to IAF Deputy Ahmad Kofahi, the JTV broadcasts were more akin to promiscuity than entertainment.

He declared that the IAF would work together to combat what he described

as deviance. Speaking in support of his colleague, another IAF deputy, Abdul Munem Abu Zant, said that the media, in all its forms, had declared an immoral war during the Christmas and New Year period in a "cheap and decadent manner." He said that even faithful Christians would condemn such presentations.

Deputy Abu Zant stated that he felt he needed to remind the government of its oath to respect the Constitution, which stresses that Islam is the Kingdom's religion. It is of extreme importance to punish those who have contributed to such open violations of basic Islamic mores, he said.

Two other IAF members, deputies Abdul Aziz Jaber and Humam Sa'ed, also accused the media and JTV specifically of what they

viewed as unethical and non-original coverage of New Year celebrations around the world.

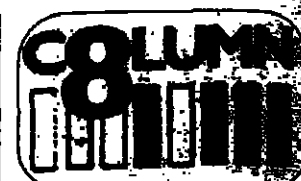
Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel SSrouf closed the discussion, stressing that the government has the right to defend itself and its position.

### Labour law

The Lower House on Sunday endorsed the 1996 labour draft law, which governs foreigners who have been granted labour permit from the Ministry of Labour.

According to the new draft law, the work permit is given after the employer pays the ministry the required fee.

The draft law refers to housemaids, gardeners, chefs and agricultural labourers.



**Charles, Diana want better ties**

LONDON (AFP) — Prince Charles and his former wife Princess Diana want to bury the hatchet for the sake of their children and the monarchy, according to the Sunday Times. The paper, quoting "a senior royal source," said the couple had even decided to attend an official ceremony together later this year, provided their separate agendas allowed it. The prince has reportedly complained in the past that his ex-wife had deliberately undertaken official engagements on the same day as he had in order to grab the media spotlight.

### Jackson in Scotland

LONDON (AFP) — Michael Jackson is snooping around Scotland in search of a castle where he would like to settle down with his wife Debbie Rowe to raise the child they are expecting, the Mail on Sunday reported.

According to the paper, the U.S. singer told reporters: "I love it here. I want to make this my home. The country is beautiful and the people are beautiful. I really want to live here." The tabloid said the U.S. superstar arrived in Scotland Friday and since then has visited Stirling Castle, near Edinburgh, and Glenmayne House, near Glasgow, which is up for grabs at a mere £550,000 (\$935,000).

Mr. Jackson stressed there are no crises in the talks, but that an agreement at an extended Palestinian session on the West Bank was possible later in the day as they hoped, he responded, "I don't think so."

Talks are continuing, he said, making every possi-

### Kennedy Jr. to divorce

LONDON (AFP) — John F. Kennedy junior and Carolyn Bessette are about to divorce after only four months of marriage, the Express reported. The tabloid said Carolyn was asking for \$10 million in compensation, or half of her husband's fortune, but Kennedy's attorneys argue she is only entitled to \$650,000 according to their pre-marital contract.

### Disabled dominate Cambodia marathon

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Disabled athletes led by Cambodia's landmine victims dominated the country's first-ever marathon. Although a 22-year-old Dutchman won the event, it was most notable for the large number of disabled athletes who competed. Nearly 50 disabled men and women finished at least a portion of the 42.5-kilometre race, run in a country where one in every 236 people has lost a limb to a landmine explosion.

### Police prevent condom distribution as Pope leads prayers

ROME (AFP) — Police on Sunday intervened to prevent students from distributing condoms in Saint Peter's Square as Pope John Paul II led prayers for the Angelus, student leaders said. However, about 15 students, who belong to the left-leaning students' union, managed to distribute condoms in the street leading to the Vatican, which is full of people on a Sunday morning. Walter Schepis, leader of the students' union, said the distribution of contraceptives was in protest at an article, entitled "Slaves of Sex," in the Vatican newspaper, the Osservatore Romano. The article described as "abnormal" the decision to place a condom machine in a school on the northern Italian city of Turin. A tract entitled "Slaves of Sex," but free to lower students denounced the Catholic Church's position, which opposes the use of condoms as a means of preventing AIDS.

## EU envoy meets Israelis over Hebron stalemate

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The European Union's (EU) special Middle East envoy, Miguel Angel Moratinos, met Sunday with senior Israeli officials to discuss the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, officials said.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said Mr. Moratinos held talks with an Israeli team headed by ministry director General Eitan Ben Tsur to discuss the peace process, but he gave no further details.

Mr. Moratinos met in Gaza City Saturday night with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and reaffirmed EU support for Palestinian demands that Israel fully honour its commitments to extend self-rule to most of the West Bank this year, a spokesman said.

"The European Union supports implementation of the accord concluded notably on the Israeli military redeployment in the West Bank," said EU spokesman Christophe Farnaud. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations stalled last week over Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu's refusal to agree to withdraw Israeli troops from West Bank rural areas by September as required under signed interim peace accords. The dispute has blocked signature of an agreement on bringing Palestinian rule to Hebron, the last West Bank city under full Israeli occupation.

The Palestinian leadership issued an appeal late Saturday to the European Union and other foreign powers to pressure Israel to honour its peace commitments.

"If the international community does not move to save the peace process from the imminent danger, the region will see an explosion which will harm not only the parties in the area but also international stability," the leadership said after a late night meeting chaired by Mr. Arafat. "Negotiations are at a near dead end and the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu bears full responsibility for bringing matters to this impasse and to the brink of explosion," the statement said.

## Khaddam in Iran on fence-mending trip

TEHRAN (AFP) — Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam arrived in Tehran on Sunday afternoon on a two-day official visit aimed at easing tensions between the two countries, diplomats said.

Mr. Khaddam, who is accompanied by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa, due to hold talks later Sunday with Iran's First Vice President Hassan Habibi before meeting Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Monday.

On his arrival, Mr. Khaddam told reporters that he would be examining "bilateral, regional and international issues," adding that he was carrying a message from Syrian President Hafez Al Assad to Mr. Rafsanjani.

An Arab diplomat in Tehran said the aim of the visit was to "dissipate the tensions" between Damascus and Tehran after a wave of Iranian press criticism of perceived anti-Iranian stances by Damascus.

Syria, Iran's strategic ally in the Middle East, joined Egypt and six Gulf Arab countries meeting in Cairo last week to criticise Iran for its deployment of missiles on three islands under Iranian control but also claimed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The signatories to the so-called Damascus declaration affirmed the UAE's right to the sovereignty of Abu Musa, Greater Tumb and Lesser Tumb and urged Iran to end its "occupation" of the islands.

They also said Tehran posed a "direct threat" to the Arab states across the Gulf and their strategic sites. Damascus's endorsement of the statement provoked an outcry in the Iranian press, which said Syria had "stabbed Iran in the back."

The Damascus declaration was signed in 1991 after the Gulf war to facilitate economic and security cooperation between Arab members of the U.S.-led coalition which drove Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

## Baghdad luring Kurds to counter U.S. influence

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's government, in a bid to end U.S. influence in northern Iraq, is trying to draw rebel Kurds closer to the central administration.

Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) this month issued a law allowing Kurds to obtain passports in towns under central government control.

Last September Baghdad removed its internal embargo on the Kurdish area, which is split into two spheres of influence under rival Kurdish groups.

U.N. officials say people and vehicles move smoothly to and from the region but more easily to the strip under Kurdish rebel leader Massoud Barzani head of

the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) than to areas under his rival, Jalal Talabani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The government, the officials said, is paying pensioners in northern Iraq and sending school textbooks to the region.

The government has issued a law postponing indefinitely military service for Kurds. But they must report to conscription departments to have their papers properly processed.

The highways to Kurdish region are busy these days. Many Kurds need to have their papers properly done to be in good shape once the Baghdad government restores control of the region," said one

U.N. official.

One U.N. official said young Kurds seeking passports had to register with conscription offices in either Mosul or Kirkuk, two main Iraqi cities close to the Kurdish areas.

The RCC last week passed a law pardoning soldiers who deserted to Kurdish areas in the past four years. Baghdad newspapers said thousands were giving themselves up to central government authorities.

The rapprochement between the central government and rebel Kurds started when the KDP asked Baghdad's help to oust rivals from the city of Erbil in August 1996. Since then, Iraqi President Saddam

Hussein has increased his influence in the region, forcing the U.S. and allies to withdraw agents and relief workers.

"On the ground the U.S. and allies have now little left in the region, particularly in areas under the KDP which include the two major towns of Erbil and Dohuk," said a Kurdish watcher in Baghdad who declined to be named.

He said Baghdad's influence was less noticeable in the strip under the PUK which included the Kurdish stronghold of Sulaimaniyah.

The Kurdish area had been outside Baghdad's influence since the United States, France and Britain set up a no-fly zone over

northern Iraq shortly after the 1991 Gulf war with the stated aim of protecting Kurds from possible attacks by the Iraqi armed forces.

A senior U.S. official met representatives of the rival Kurdish factions this week in a fresh bid to limit Saddam's influence in the area. He is expected to meet them again in Ankara next week.

Diplomats in Baghdad said the U.S. initiative was in response to the latest overtures by Baghdad to the Kurds. One diplomat said Saddam last year sent his envoy Mukarram Talabani to the area to break a deadlock in talks granting the Kurdish region enhanced autonomy.

## British nurse tells relatives she is innocent of murder

DUBAI (AFP) — A tearful nurse told relatives visiting her at a Saudi police station that she was innocent of charges she murdered an Australian colleague, her brother-in-law said Sunday.

Deborah Parry, 41, and Scottish colleague Lucille McLauchlan, 31, were allowed Sunday to see family members for the first time since both were accused of the Dec. 11 murder. Ms. Parry's brother-in-law John Ashby told AFP.

"She was very upset that anybody could think she could have done this," Mr. Ashby told AFP when reached by telephone at his hotel in the eastern Saudi city of Dammam.

"She was crying. I was crying," he said, adding Ms. Parry was wearing a black robe which women must wear in Saudi Arabia when they appear in public.

Ms. Parry's brother was killed in a motorcycle accident as a teenager, her mother drowned during a holiday, her father died of a heart attack when he was 54, and her sister Sandra's first husband died of a brain tumor, Mr. Ashby said.

Ms. Parry, who is from Alton in southern England, entered nursing to help people, not harm them, he added.

During the visit which lasted almost two hours, Mr. Parry asked Mr. Ashby about his four children and was told her friends and family were doing everything they could in her defence. "Our mission was to provide moral support," Mr. Ashby said.

Mr. Ashby said he and Ms. Parry's uncle Terry Knight met with Ms. Parry at the police station while Stan and Ann McLauchlan of Dundee, Scotland, met their daughter Lucille in a separate room.

The nurses, who are accused of stabbing and choking Australian colleague Yvonne Gifford at the King Fahd Military Medical Complex in Dhahran, have been in prison in Dammam for the past three weeks.

The nurses were initially said to have admitted killing Gifford, 55, on Dec. 11. They have since retracted their confessions, claiming that they were given under duress.

Their Saudi lawyer Saleh Al Hujailan said they had confessed after being told that if they did so they would be allowed to return to Britain and would not face prosecution in Saudi Arabia.

## New draft of Hebron deal said to differ little from earlier one

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An almost-completed understanding on extending Palestinian rule to Hebron includes few differences from the agreement drawn up under Israel's former Labour government, the Maariv newspaper revealed Sunday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had hoped in the 11-page accord yet to be signed to revise the Oslo II agreement signed by Labour to further ensure the security of settlers in the city.

Some 450 militant Jewish settlers live in enclaves in the center of the city of 120,000 Palestinians.

The following are the main differences in the new accord as presented by Maariv:

— Creation of a "buffer zone" around the Jewish enclave where armed Palestinians will not be permitted;

— More joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols in the Palestinian zone, labelled "H-1" in the accord, notably on hills overlooking Jewish homes;

— "Rapid intercession teams" will be formed comprising 16 troops from both sides to thwart attacks and control riots in H-1. Israel had given in on a demand its troops be allowed "hot pursuit" into H-1 areas to prevent or respond to attacks on settlers;

— Palestinians in the joint patrols will be armed with mini-ingram sub-machineguns while Israeli soldiers will carry long-range M-16 automatic rifles;

— Palestinian police to be stationed in the city will have to undergo

Israeli security checks. The new protocol will be signed only once negotiators overcome differences on further redeployments of Israeli troops from other areas of the West Bank.

Under the understanding, 400 Palestinian police will be stationed in H-1, armed with 200 pistols and 100 rifles. In addition, Shuhada Street, a major road running through the Jewish settlement, will be gradually reopened to Palestinian traffic.

Israeli government spokesman Moshe Fogel declined to confirm or deny the accuracy of the Maariv draft, but insisted the new agreement being negotiated with the Palestinians was an improvement.

"Oslo II has certain friction points that will be defused in the new understanding," he told AFP.

"This agreement is a better one because it more specifically details the security arrangement in order to maintain the security of the settlers," Mr. Fogel said.

Hebron settler spokesman David Wilder, disagreed.

"The changes Benjamin Netanyahu wanted in the agreement have yet to be seen," Mr. Wilder told AFP. "As soon as the Palestinians legitimately have arms in Hebron, the danger to us goes up tremendously."

He specifically charged that opening Shuhada Street would allow Palestinians to plant car bombs near the settler community.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. opposes South Africa Monday to cancel the deal "a very serious" deal, the Times of Johannesburg said. The U.S. government had sanctioned South Africa's missile systems, that's a very bad idea," White House said, adding that White House would not go through with the deal. "We stand the seriousness of the issue," the U.S. Department of State said. The U.S. expressed strongly worded disapproval.

## Israel, PLO final touch after King produces

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met Monday and high optimism they might finally wrap up a peace package that would extend Palestinian rule to Hebron and other parts of the West Bank.

After more than five hours of U.S.-mediated negotiations at a Jerusalem hotel, the Palestinian delegation left to break their fast during the Holy month of Ramadan and officials on both sides said no work was needed.

"We are coming back tonight, we need a bit more time," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said. Mr. Erakat stressed there are no crises in the talks, but that an agreement at an extended Palestinian session on the West Bank was possible later in the day as they hoped, he responded, "I don't think so."

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